SERMONS

ON

USEFUL AND IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN COSENS, D. D.

MINISTER OF TEDDINGTON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND; J. DEIGHTON, (LATE LOCKYER DAVIS'S) HOLBORN; S. COOK, OXFORD; AND J. AND J. MERRIL, CAMBRIDGE.

MDCC XCIII.

SERMONS

THE

CONTENTS.

VOLUME I.

SER-

and

SER

SER-

LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS.

MRS. Abbott.
Rev. P. D'Aranda, Twickenham.
Major Akerman, Graveſend.
Mr. William Aſhforth, junior, Bartholomew-cloſe.
Oliver Aplin, Eſq. Banbury.
——— Alexander, Eſq. Teddington.
Rev. Mr. Adams, Pembroke College, Oxford.

Rev. Dr. Burrough, Magd. College, Oxford, 2 copies.
Mrs. Bacon, Bruton-ſtreet.
Rev. Samuel Biſhop, Merchant-Taylors School.
Rev. W. Butler, 3 copies.
Mrs. Blunt, Hampton-court-green.
Capt. Bridge, Kingſton.
Robert Burnett, Eſq.
Mr. Joſeph Braſbridge, Fleet-ſtreet.
Richard Bignell, Eſq. Banbury.
Rev. George Bridgeman.

John Blackiſton, Eſq. Lincoln's Inn.
Mrs. Brown, Teddington.
Mr. Henry Baldwin, Bridge-ſtreet.
Mrs. Bowen.
Rev. Dr. Brickenden, Rector of Appleton, Berks.
Rev. Dr. Biſhop, Rector of Wells, Somerſetſh.
Rev. Mr. Barnard, C. C. C. Oxford.

The Rt. Hon. Counteſs of Cathrolough, 2 cop.
Rev. Colſton Carr, Twickenham.
Rev. Robartes Carr, Bengal.
Mr. Robert Carr, Worceſter College, Oxford.
Mrs. Cole, Twickenham.
Major Cole, ditto.
Rev. Charles Cole, Stutton, Suffolk.
Miſs Cox, Kingſton.
Peter Curry, Eſq.
Mr. Richard Croſsley, Giltſpur-ſtreet.
Mr. Henry Chauner, Paternoſter-row.
Rev. S. Chappelow, Hill-ſtreet.
Mr. Cuff, Teddington.
Rev. Thomas Clarkſon.
Mr. Curtis, Clarendon-ſtreet, Oxford.
Rev. Mr. Curtis, Magdalen College, Oxford.
Rev. Mr. Collinſon, Queen's College, Oxford.
Mr. Collins.

Miſs Davenport, Teddington.

John

John Davenport, Eſq. Twickenham.
Mrs. Daviſon, ditto.
William Dobſon, Eſq. ditto.
Rev. William Drake, Iſleworth.
Rev. Dr. Duval, Twickenham.
Mr. Daddle, Pembroke College, Oxford.

Richard Edmonds, Eſq.

Rev. Dr. Fothergill, Provoſt of Queen's College, Oxford.
Jacob Franks, Eſq. Iſleworth.
Rev. Dr. Flamaſk, Trinity College, Oxford.
R. B. Fiſher, Eſq. Middle Temple.
Rev. Mr. Farrer, Rector of Warmington, Warwickſhire.

The Rt. Hon. Earl of Guildford, 2 copies.
The Rt. Hon. the Counteſs of Guildford, 2 do.
Rev. Dr. Gabriel, Harlington.
Maſter R. B. Gabriel, ditto.
Maſter J. C. Gabriel, ditto.
Mr. Green, Ludgate-ſtreet.
David Giddy, Eſq. Pembroke College, Oxford.
Rev. Robert Gray, Twickenham.
Mrs. Goddin, Hampton.
David Garrick, Eſq. ditto.
Mr. Gouaz.

Rev. James Gifford, Whaplode, Lincolnſhire.

Rev. Dr. Howel, Principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxford.
Mrs. G. Hardinge, Twickenham.
Rev. John Hebden, Hounſlow.
Rev. Mr. Harriſon.
Mr. Hemming, Kingſton.
Rev. Samuel Hemming, Twickenham.
Edward Harvey, Eſq. 2 copies.
Dr. Hallifax, Profeſſor of Divinity, Greſham College.
Mrs. Hallifax.
Mrs. Hockley, Blacklands.
Rev. Mr. Homer, Magdalen College, Oxford.
J. Hopkinſon, M. B. ditto.
Rev. Mr. Hutton, ditto.

Edward Ironſide, Eſq. Twickenham.
Rev. G. Jenyns, Q. Hall, Cambridge.
Rev. Mr. Jenner, Magdalen College, Oxford.
——— Jenner, Eſq. A. M. Merton College, Oxford.

The Biſhop of London.
Rev. Henry Lord, Merchant-Taylors School.
John Linfield, Eſq. Kingſton.
Mrs. Legh, ditto.

Mr.

Mr. Lefevre, 2 copies.
Mr. Lyncy, No. 10, Little Knight-Ryder-ſtr.
Mr. Lockton, Pembroke College, Oxford.
Rev. Mr. Litchfield, Goring-heath, Oxford.

Rev. P. A. Mackenzie, Teddington.
Rev. J. S. Mackenzie, Holbeach.
Rev. Anthony Mainwaring, St. John's College, Cambridge.
John May, Eſq. Twickenham.
Mrs. Moreton, Groſvenor-ſtreet.
——— Moreland, Eſq. Bath.
John Mills, Eſq.
W. Mills, Eſq. Denton Houſe, near Wheatly.
Rev. W. Manning.
Rev. Dr. Metcalfe, Magdalen College, Oxford.
Rev. Mr. Mead, ditto.
Rev. Mr. Monkhouſe, Queen's Coll. Oxford.

Lady Anne North, 2 copies.
Lady Charlotte North, 2 copies.
Rev. Dr. Nowell, Principal of St. Mary's Hall, Oxford.
John Newman, Eſq. Banbury.
Mr. Henry Newman, Teddington.
Rev. Mr. J. Naylor, Queen's Coll. Cambridge.

Rev.

Rev. Dr. Oglander, Warden of New College, Oxford.
Rev. Henry Oglander, Wincheſter College.
The Ongar Society.

Rt. Hon. Counteſs Dowager Poulett, Twickenham.
The Rev. Archdeacon Pott.
Mrs. Pool, Teddington.
Miſs Pope, Great Queen-ſtreet, 2 copies.
Rev. Francis Plumer, Twickenham.
William Paſter, junior, Shepperton.
William Perkins, M. D. Hampton.
Rev. Mr. Pennicott, Long Ditton.
Mrs. Phillips, Hampton-court.

Rev. Dr. Routh, Preſident of Magdalen College, Oxford, 2 copies.
Rev. Mr. Rawbone, Vice-Principal of St. Mary Hall.
Miſs Roberts, Graveſend.
Miſs Richford.
Rev. Mr. Richards, Epſom.
Thomas Ranby Reid, Eſq. Chelſea, 2 copies.
Rev. H. Robinſon.

Rev. Dr. Sheffield, Provoſt of Worceſter Col.

Rev.

Rev. Dr. Segrove, Maſter of Pembroke College, Oxford.
Walwyn Shepheard, Eſq. Boſwell-court.
Rev. Dr. Sumner.
Rev. Mr. Skipton.
Mr. Spence.
Mr. Staniforth, Bread-ſtreet, 2 copies.
Mr. Thomas Slade, Bartholomew-cloſe.
Thomas Smith, Eſq. Bridge-ſtr. Black-friars.
Rev. Charles Smith, Euſton.
Rev. Mr. Simpſon, Univerſity College, Oxford.
Rev. Mr. Stacey, Holywell, Oxford.
Rev. Mr. Swiſſmore, New College, Oxford.
Rev. Mr. Smith, Pembroke College, ditto.

Rev. Dr. Taylor, Iſleworth.
——— Twiſs, Eſq. Bath.
Miſs Thomas, Hampton-court.
Rev. Dr. Tatam, Lincoln College, Oxford.
Rev. Mr. Tate, Magdalen College, ditto.

Paul Vaillant, Eſq. Twickenham.
Rev. Philip Vaillant, ditto.
Rev. Dr. Valpy, Reading.
Mrs. Vaughan, Twickenham.

LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS.

Mr. Uſtonſon, Fleet-ſtreet.

Rev. Dr. Wetherel, Dean of Hereford.
Rev. Thomas Wakefield, Richmond.
Mr. Ward, Ludgate-ſtreet.
Jacob Wilkinſon, Eſq. Worceſter Coll. Oxford.
Richard Wood, Eſq. York.
Richard Weeks, Eſq. 2 copies.
Rev. Mr. Willis, Worceſter College.
Rev. Mr. Whitcombe, Magd. College, Oxford.
Dr. Wall, Oxford.

SERMON I.

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION;

OR COMMON.

Διὰ τυτο λεγω ὑμιν· Πασα αμαρτια καὶ βλασφημια αφεθησεται τοις ανθρωποις.

Matt. xii. 31.

SERMON I.

Wherefore, I ſay unto you, all manner of ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men; but the blaſphemy againſt the HOLY GHOST *ſhall not be forgiven unto men.*

Matt. xii. 31.

SERM. I.

IT is very remarkable, that among the various miſchiefs which the wild doctrines and opinions of ſome modern enthuſiaſts have produced, there are two, which, though directly the reverſe of each other, are yet perhaps equally dangerous to Salvation:—An unwarrantable and ill-grounded preſumption on the *Mercy of* GOD, productive of the moſt daring wickedneſs, on the one hand; and a total

SERM. I. diſtruſt and deſpair of it, frequently ending in melancholy, madneſs, and ſelf-murder, on the other.

To remove theſe two grand impediments, both to our preſent and future happineſs, the words of the text, if duly examined, may be of very ſingular ſervice. Inaſmuch as the weak and deſponding Chriſtian, hearing that *all manner of ſin and blaſphemy may be forgiven unto men*, will find ſufficient encouragement whereon to build his hopes of pardon and acceptance; and, at the ſame time, the *religious libertine*—for this old hereſy with a new name would teach us to reconcile even contradictions in terms—will at leaſt find one ſin there ſpecified, of which, notwithſtanding all his inward feelings, and undefineable aſſurances of unalterable adoption, of which, if he ſhould be guilty, CHRIST himſelf hath declared he is irrecoverably undone to all eternity: and, conſequently, that all notions of abſolute, unconditional election, or predeſtination to happineſs, are

are a vain chimera, as falſe in fact, as they are wicked in their tendency. SERM. I.

The text, then, contains two poſitive aſſertions or propoſitions:

Firſt, that all manner of ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men: and,

Secondly, that the blaſphemy againſt the HOLY GHOST ſhall not be forgiven unto men.

The *former* of theſe only will furniſh ample ſcope for our *preſent* meditations, if we conſider,

In the firſt place, What we are to underſtand by this general expreſſion—*All manner of ſin and blaſphemy.*

Secondly, if we endeavour to evince the truth of the poſition, and enquire farther into the ground and foundation of this forgiveneſs, and what are the condi-

SERM. I. tions to be performed on our part, in order to obtain it. And,

In the third, and laſt place, if we make a ſuitable application to theſe two ſorts of perſons.

And, firſt, I am to conſider, what we are to underſtand by this expreſſion, *all manner of ſin and blaſphemy.* Now *ſin*, in the general notion of the term, is the tranſgreſſion of the Law of GOD; or, in other words, the oppoſition of our thoughts, words, and actions, to the Divine Will and Attributes, as revealed by the Holy Scriptures, or intimated and avowed by our own natural apprehenſion. St. John gives us an adequate and complete definition of it to the ſame effect: "Whoſoever (ſays "he) committeth ſin, tranſgreſſeth alſo the "law, for ſin is the tranſgreſſion of the "law." Suppoſing this definition then to be what I have called it—*adequate and complete*—it is not neceſſary to the idea of

ſin, that a man ſhould have a determined, habitual *reſolution* to commit it. It is ſufficient that the Law of GOD be actually tranſgreſſed. So that a perſon, who through ignorance or inadvertency, who through a careleſs, irreligious temper, or an immoderate fondneſs for the riches, honors, and pleaſures of the world—the dreadful rock on which ſo many thouſands, at the preſent day, make ſhip-wreck of their precious, immortal ſouls—or who voluntarily plunges himſelf into a *ſtate* in which he is inſenſible of what he ſays and does, and *then* violates a divine command, is indiſputably guilty of ſin; inasmuch as he has acted contrary to thoſe laws, which GOD hath preſcribed as the indiſpenſible and invariable rules of our conduct in this life. Nothing leſs than *invincible* ignorance of our duty, ſuch as is to be found in ideots, lunatics, and perſons totally void of underſtanding, can excuſe the tranſgreſſion of a law, or render it not ſinful. Even an innocent intention

SERM. I.

SERM. I. cannot be admitted to ſanctify, no not to *excuſe*, a *bad action*. For he who wilfully and deliberately violates the law of GOD, though he really had no bad intention in ſo doing, thereby ſufficiently demonſtrates that he pays very little regard either to the law, or to the lawgiver; and therefore is as certainly, though not as *highly*, culpable, as if he had entertained other evil deſigns. In this ſenſe, muſt be underſtood that celebrated paſſage of St. James: "Whoſoever ſhall keep the whole law, "and yet offend in one point, he is guilty "of all." That is, he is guilty of violating that authority, which is the ſanction of all.

But it may be aſked, does not a good intention—a view of compaſſing ſome laudable end, though it be in violation of a poſitive law—in ſome ſort *mitigate* the offence, and render the action, if not altogether juſtifiable, yet, at leaſt, leſs *criminal*, in the ſight of GOD? But it is certain, that the intention can never be innocent,

innocent, when it is attended with open rebellion againſt the Majeſty of Heaven. GOD's laws are, at the peril of our ſouls, to be univerſally regarded as the *indiſpenſible* rules by which we are to regulate every thought, word, and action of our lives—I ſay, the *indiſpenſible* rules; inaſmuch as when he preſcribed them, he undoubtedly foreſaw every poſſible exception and objection that could afterwards be made againſt them, even to the end of the world. Of thoſe, therefore, who ſay, "let us do evil, "that good may come," the holy Apoſtle ſcruples not to declare "that their damna-"tion is juſt." For ſhall man, whoſe higheſt knowledge it is to be convinced of his own ignorance—ſhall duſt and aſhes, preſume to take upon themſelves to correct and amend the inſtitutions of infinite Wiſdom? If a good intention could have rendered the breach of a divine command either innocent or excuſable, certainly *Saul* had not ſinned, when he *ſpared* the beſt of the ſheep and of the oxen of the Amalakites,

SERM. I

SERM. I. which he was ſent utterly to deſtroy; ſince he did it with no other view than to offer them in ſacrifice to GOD. His *intention* then was evidently *good*. And yet hear the deciſion of an infallible caſuiſt upon this ſubject: "Hath the Lord (interro-"gates the Prophet Samuel) hath the "Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings "and ſacrifices, as in obeying the voice of "the Lord? Behold, to obey, is better "than ſacrifice, and to hearken, than the "fat of rams." And, accordingly we find that for this very act of diſobedience he was rejected of GOD, and diveſted of his regal dignity.

St. Paul's intention was unqueſtionably good when he perſecuted the church of Chriſt, becauſe he was verily perſuaded in his own mind that the doctrines of Chriſtianity were falſe. And yet we find him, after his converſion, confeſſing and bewailing his ſin with bitter ſorrow and confuſion, and calling himſelf the *chief* of ſinners on this very account. "I was

"before

"before (ſays he) a blaſphemer, and a "perſecutor, and injurious." SERM. I.

I have been the more particular in this examination, becauſe, plain as the ſubject of it may appear, the Papal church has dared, in oppoſition both to reaſon and revelation, publicly to maintain a contrary doctrine; and if it can be admitted that the glory of GOD is advanced by a lye, ſcruples not to practiſe holy perjuries and pious frauds.

However, it may be proper upon the whole, to obſerve, that though we moſt certainly commit ſin *whenever* we tranſgreſs the Law of GOD, even without any intention of doing it; yet that an habitual *intention* to diſobey, and ſacrifice our religion to the world, does greatly aggravate the offence, and enhance, infinitely enhance, the guilt and turpitude of it. And it may be humbly preſumed, that a tranſgreſſion incurred merely through ignorance, inadvertency, or the ſudden prevalence of diſorderly paſſions, though it does not

ceaſe

SERM. I. ceaſe to be ſinful, will nevertheleſs, conſidered under ſuch circumſtances, appear not altogether ſo odious in the ſight of GOD; and that he will not be ſo averſe to pardon and forgive it, as if it had been committed from a principle of malicious obſtinacy, and againſt the conviction of reaſon and conſcience. And therefore St. Paul, notwithſtanding "he perſecuted "the Church of GOD," nevertheleſs obtained "mercy, becauſe he did it *ignorantly* in unbelief."

It appears then that ſin is a *complex* term, uſed in Scripture to expreſs every deviation from our duty, and admits of an infinite variety of diſtinctions, ſuch as, ſins againſt GOD, our neighbour, and ourſelves; ſins of ignorance, infirmity, and malice; great and crying ſins, as adultery, murder, and the like; and others leſs heinous in their nature, and conſequently more venial in the ſight of GOD. For though it muſt be acknowledged that *all ſins* are offenſive to him, inaſmuch as they

are

are all infractions of his poſitive precepts and injunctions, and contradictions to his attributes; it is nevertheleſs certain that they are not equally ſo (as has been raſhly taught) but that ſome are *more* offenſive than others; and, conſequently, that they will not all be puniſhed with equal ſeverity at the day of judgement. SERM. L.

Our bleſſed Lord, that he might omit none of theſe ſeveral kinds, does not only aſſert in the text, that "all manner of *ſin* "ſhall be forgiven unto men," but "that "all manner of ſin and *blaſphemy* ſhall be "forgiven."

Blaſphemy is the higheſt ſpecies of detraction and calumny; and in the original denotes that vice by which a man endeavours to wound the reputation of another:—A vice of a moſt baſe and deteſtable nature, and which therefore deſerved to be particularly ſpecified. If we conſider it with regard to GOD (as our preſent ſubject demands) we are thereby to underſtand that particular ſin, by which we impute

to

SERM. I.

to GOD the Father, or to CHRIST the Son, ſuch things as are injurious to, or unworthy of, them; whereby we aim, as much as in us lies, to rob them of thoſe perfections which are inſeparable from their nature, and which they cannot but poſſeſs.

We alſo blaſpheme GOD, when we deny him in any ſort, profane him by raſh and vain oaths, or otherwiſe expoſe his tremendous Name and holy Word to the mockery of the licentious and profane, or render it the ſubject of ſarcaſtic raillery, reproach, and contempt. It was thus that Pharaoh blaſphemed GOD, when he inſolently and ſcoffingly replied to Moſes, "Who is the Lord, that I ſhould obey his "voice, to let Iſrael go? I know not the "Lord, neither will I let Iſrael go." It is thus that thoſe malicious children of their father, the modern infidels, *blaſpheme*, in their weak and wicked attempts to undermine the evidences of revealed religion.

But,

But, having conſidered the import of this general expreſſion, I am now, in the SERM. I.

Second place, to evince the truth of the doctrine, that "all manner of ſin and blaſ-"phemy may be *forgiven* unto men."—A doctrine the moſt univerſally intereſting in the whole compaſs of ſacred Scripture; and which, I truſt, will engage all, who have a real concern for their religious intereſts, carefully to inveſtigate and aſcertain the ground and foundation of this forgiveneſs; and what are the conditions to be performed on our part in order to obtain it; as any miſapprehenſion here may have the moſt fatal tendency.

And were we poſſeſſed of no other aſſurance of this truth, the words of the text alone are abundantly ſufficient to ſatisfy every reaſonable perſon:—Words of ſuch plain and unexceptionable import, that they are not (like ſome other paſſages of Scripture) capable of being either miſtaken or miſrepreſented. "*All manner of ſin*

ſhall

SERM. I. *ſhall be forgiven unto men.*" Not only ſuch ſins as are, in their own nature, trivial and light; not barely ſins of ignorance, forgetfulneſs, and omiſſion—but *all manner* of ſin, every imaginable deviation from our duty, however aggravated by circumſtances, or how frequently ſoever repeated; ſince even *blaſphemy* itſelf is not excepted, which is confeſſedly the higheſt degree of daring, poſitive wickedneſs; and conſequently, moſt offenſive in the ſight of GOD.

But it may not perhaps appear altogether ſo concluſive to prove the truth of the propoſition contained in the text, by the text itſelf. Let us therefore recollect that there is a variety of other paſſages wherein this doctrine of univerſal forgiveneſs is inculcated and eſtabliſhed. Can any thing, for inſtance, be more expreſs to this purpoſe, than what we read in the works of that evangelical Prophet, Iſaiah? "Come now, and let us reaſon together, "ſaith the Lord; though your ſins be as "ſcarlet,

"ſcarlet, they ſhall be white as ſnow; SERM. I.
"though they be red like crimſon, they
"ſhall be as wool."—"Praiſe the Lord, O
"my ſoul (ſays the Pſalmiſt) and forget
"not all his benefits, who forgiveth *all*
"thy ſin, and healeth all thy infirmity."
—"If we confeſs our ſins (ſays St. John)
"he is faithful and juſt to *forgive* us our
"ſins, and to cleanſe us from *all* unrigh-
"teouſneſs."

Now the ground and foundation of this general remiſſion of ſin, is, and can be, no other than the mere grace and favour of GOD. For can any man—can the leaſt-offending of the ſons of men, with a ſhadow of reaſon, upon any known principles of juſtice or equity, ever *pretend* a *right* to ſuch a privilege? a privilege which not only exempts him from the puniſhment due to his ſins, but puts him into poſſeſſion of "the inheritance of the "ſaints and angels in light!" Suppoſe but one ſin, only one ſingle ſin, regiſtered againſt us; can the Deiſt or Infidel, with

SERM. I. all the ſubtilty of the great Deceiver on his ſide, point out any plauſible means by which it may be expiated? 'Tis evidently impoſſible. We owe our Creator nothing leſs than a whole life of unſinning obedience: and our future, unremitting diligence, cannot, upon any natural principles, make an atonement for our paſt negligence. With reſpect to GOD, a work of *ſupererogation* is a palpable abſurdity. Here natural Religion muſt neceſſarily deſpair for ever. Yes! nothing —nothing but the efficacious Blood of a crucified Redeemer can poſſibly blot out the hand-writing againſt us. "We *all* "have ſinned (ſays St. Paul) and come "ſhort of the Glory of GOD: being "*juſtified* or pardoned FREELY by his "*Grace*, through the redemption that is "in JESUS CHRIST."

It is to JESUS CHRIST then, and to the redemption which he has purchaſed for us by his Death and Merits, that we are entirely indebted for the poſſible remiſſion

of

of any one ſin of our lives. He having fully ſatisfied the Divine Juſtice in our ſtead, and ſecured the Divine Honor, GOD thereupon becomes favourable and propitious to us; willing for his ſake to pardon the many ſlips and infirmities, which through the frailty of our nature we are ſtill liable to be betrayed into, and always ready, upon our ſincere and unfeigned repentance, to reinſtate us in his favour. And hence all thoſe comfortable declarations in holy Scripture, "There is now "no condemnation to them which are in "CHRIST JESUS."—"To him give all "the Prophets witneſs, that through his "Name, whoſoever believeth in him, "ſhall receive remiſſion of ſins."—And again, "GOD ſo loved the world, that he "gave his only-begotten ſon, that whoſo-"ever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, "but have everlaſting life." But let us be particularly careful to obſerve that this univerſal pardon and forgiveneſs through the ſatisfaction of CHRIST is promiſed to

SERM. I

SERM. I.

thoſe only that *believe*. *Faith* and its neceſſary attendants, love of moral virtue, and ſincere *repentance*—when we have offended againſt it; and future obedience are the indiſpenſable conditions on which alone we muſt expect to partake of that mighty ſalvation which he hath obtained.

Not that even faith and repentance have any particular efficacy in *themſelves* to work out our forgiveneſs—for alas! what neceſſary connection can we diſcover between the faith of a repenting ſinner and the infinite bleſſings conſequent on the *pardon* of our ſins? Faith would have been our duty if we had never offended; conſequently faith can plead nothing by way of *condignity or merit*. When therefore we aſſert, that it is through faith and repentance that we obtain remiſſion of our ſins, all we mean is, that theſe are the *conditions* which GOD has been pleaſed to preſcribe for our juſtification. The Crown of Glory is not offered

as

as what we ever had, or poſſibly could have a *natural inherent right* to, but as purchaſed at the price of our dear Redeemer's blood; it is therefore moſt highly reaſonable that we ſhould conſider it as the mere Grace and Favour of GOD, and expect it only upon thoſe terms which he himſelf hath required. This, I think, muſt be ſo obvious to every one, that I may now proceed, SERM. I.

In the third and laſt place, to make a ſhort application of what has been ſaid to thoſe two ſorts of perſons—the *preſumptuous*, and the deſponding Chriſtian.

And firſt, I addreſs myſelf to that deluded libertine, who, though he indulge himſelf in the unbounded gratification of his ſinful paſſions whether in the ways of unjuſt gain or unlawful pleaſures, yet preſumes to rely on the Mercy of GOD; in confidence of obtaining a plenary remiſſion of his ſins,

SERM. I. through a mere ſpeculative, indolent faith in the merit and ſatisfaction of CHRIST. It has been already obſerved how deplorably vain and ill-grounded ſuch a preſumption is. That our Saviour CHRIST does indeed promiſe that all manner of ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven, is undeniably true: and that too, by virtue of the meritorious ſacrifice which he made of himſelf upon the Croſs. But can we poſſibly bring ourſelves to imagine that this promiſe is to be underſtood in ſuch an abſolute unlimited ſenſe, as to encourage even the impenitent, daring, and profligate ſinner to hope to partake of it? If ſo, inſtead of aſking, with the diſciples, "Who then can be ſaved?" we might rather demand—who would *not* be ſaved? This promiſe is without doubt *conditional*; it ſuppoſes—as I truſt has been ſatisfactorily proved—on our part, a lively, operative *faith* and ſincere *repentance*, and though not the univerſal practice, yet the habitual *love*, of moral

holineſs, and virtue. St. Paul ſolemnly aſſures us, in ſo many words, that our Saviour CHRIST JESUS gave himſelf for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of *good works*. If theſe neceſſary qualifications are wanting in us —if we do not abſolutely renounce all ſin, and ſtedfaſtly *reſolve* to "live ſoberly, "righteouſly, and godly in this preſent "world," it is not to *us* that the promiſe is made. And ſo far are we from being entitled to it, that the Scripture poſitively declares concerning ſuch preſumptuous notions—that "for theſe things ſake, the "*wrath* of GOD—his eternal vengeance— "cometh on the children of diſobedience."

SERM. I.

We may with as much reaſon tell thoſe "filthy dreamers," ſince they claim the privilege, that they are not men, but *beaſts*; and conſequently that a promiſe of forgiveneſs of "all manner of ſin and blaſphemy "unto *men*," that is, reaſonable creatures and moral agents, cannot extend unto them.

SERM. I. Nay we might even *juſtify* the diſtinction from Scripture, and particularly from the 22d of the Revelations, where on characterizing the obedient and diſobedient, the latter are emphatically called *dogs*; and as ſuch, for ever excluded from the pure manſions of happineſs and glory. "Bleſſed "are they that do his commandments, "that they may have a right to (or as it "ſhould be tranſlated, that they may "have power over) the Tree of Life, "and may enter in through the gates into "the city. For *without* are *dogs*, and "ſorcerers, and whoremongers, and mur-"therers, and idolaters, and whoſoever "loveth and maketh a lie.

So irreconcileably averſe is the divine purity from every ſpecies of unrighteouſneſs, that nothing leſs than the moſt precious blood of the only begotten Son of GOD could waſh unrighteouſneſs away. This was freely poured out for our paſt offences; not to diſpenſe with our future obedience, but on the contrary to demonſtrate the abſolute

and indiſpenſable neceſſity of it. It is evident therefore that indolently or preſumptuouſly to rely on, or plead the ſufferings and death of CHRIST in juſtification or excuſe of *iniquity*, will ſo little avail, that it will amount to a condemnation out of our own mouths. It is a ſolemn caution which CHRIST himſelf has recorded in his everlaſting Goſpel for perſons of this character; "Think not (ſays he) "that I am come to deſtroy the Law and "the Prophets—or to render the moral "holineſs and virtue enjoined by them "unneceſſary—I am not come to deſtroy "but to fulfil—and by new motives to "exact the performance of it."

SERM. I.

But the perſons, to whom the doctrine deducible from the text is of the greateſt concern, and for whoſe ſake chiefly, I have entered on the preſent ſubject, are thoſe diſconſolate, weak, and timorous Chriſtians, of a melancholy conſtitution of mind, whom a ſenſe of their paſt miſcarriages—or a want of that internal feeling and *aſſurance* of acceptance

SERM. I.

ance which others pretend to, has thrown into deſpair, and diſtruſt of GOD's mercy and grace. To perſons of this character it may with great propriety be repreſented that *that* very grief and ſorrow with which they are affected on account of their tranſgreſſions—their abhorrence of all ſin, and earneſt deſire "to perfect holineſs in "the fear of the Lord," is itſelf an infallible token of the Divine mercy and favour to them; and a moſt comfortable preſage that their ſins will certainly be forgiven them. It is GOD that worketh in them to *will*, as well as to do of his good pleaſure. This very ſolicitude concerning the things which belong to their peace, is an evidence of their ſincerity, and that a ſpirit of religion is ſtill alive within them. The moſt acceptable "ſacrifice of GOD is a "troubled ſpirit; a broken and a contrite "heart he will not deſpiſe."—"He will "not quench the ſmoking flax, nor break "the bruiſed reed," but will mercifully pardon the wanderings, pity the weakneſſes, and

and make the moſt gracious allowances for all the defects of infirm, but ſincere Chriſtians. SERM. L.

Conſider, brethren, what a ſtrange piece of injuſtice you do yourſelves, by holding a contrary opinion, when the whole tenor of the Goſpel, particularly the text before us, ſo plainly and abſolutely aſſures you, that "all manner of ſin and blaſ-"phemy (that great unpardonable one only "excepted) ſhall be forgiven unto men"—unto all repenting ſinners without exception. You unthinkingly offer a high indignity even to GOD and his CHRIST; whoſe merit and atonement for ſin you thus tacitly limit and circumſcribe; whoſe mercy has ever been ſo aſtoniſhingly exerted, that "where *ſin* abounded, there "*grace* did much more abound."

Why then, ye lowly ſons and daughters of religious affliction, "why are ye ſo full of "heavineſs? and why are your ſouls ſo "diſquieted within you? Aſk now of the "days that are paſt, which were before ye,

"ſince

SERM. I.

"ſince the day that GOD created man upon "the earth, and aſk from the one ſide of "Heaven unto the other—did ever any man "truſt in the Lord, and was forſaken? and "when did he reject the prayer of the con-"trite? Truſt ye therefore in the Lord "for ever, for in the Lord JEHOVAH "is everlaſting ſtrength; and as his "majeſty is, ſo is his mercy."

Does not St. Paul expreſſly aſſure you, that "there is now no condemnation to "them which are in CHRIST JESUS?" And St. John, "that the blood of JESUS "CHRIST cleanſeth us from all ſin?" But above all, frequently reflect on that moſt endearing invitation, which our Lord himſelf has condeſcended to give to you who are thus conſcious of the burthen of your ſins, and to every other repenting ſinner without diſtinction—"Come unto me all "ye that labour"—May the comfortable words ſink deep into your hearts, and produce the full aſſurance of rational hope!—"Come unto me all ye that

"labour

"labour and are heavy laden, and *I* will "give ye reſt." SERM. I.

"Seeing then, dearly beloved, that we "have a great High Prieſt, that is paſſed "into the Heavens, JESUS the Son of "GOD;" let us come *boldly*, or with an humble confidence unto the throne of Grace by frequent and fervent prayer, and by a conſcientious participation of the holy Sacrament, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Now to GOD *the Father, &c.*

SERMON II.

WHITSUNDAY.

Ἡ δὲ τῦ Πνευματος βλασφημια ουκ αφεθησεται τοις ανθρωποις.

Matt. xii. 31.

SERMON II.

WHITSUNDAY.

SERMON II.

Wherefore, I ſay unto you, all manner of ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men; but the blaſphemy againſt the HOLY GHOST *ſhall not be forgiven unto men.*

Matt. xii. 31.

SERM. II.

WE have in this ſhort ſentence two doctrines the moſt peculiarly *Chriſtian* in the whole compaſs of goſpel Revelation: On the one hand, a ſolemn promulgation of the glad tidings of univerſal pardon and forgiveneſs—and on the other, a diſcovery of a particular offence againſt the Third Perſon of the bleſſed and adorable Trinity—whoſe viſible deſcent on the Apoſtles this ſolemn feſtival

SERM. II.

is intended to commemorate—a blaſphemy againſt the HOLY GHOST, which is in its *own nature* abſolutely unpardonable, and never to be forgiven unto men.

The firſt of theſe, you will be pleaſed to recollect, was examined before you on a former occaſion. The latter, I reſerved for your preſent attention, as more ſuitable to the offices of this day;—which celebrates the unſpeakable goodneſs of your loving Redeemer, in ſending down from Heaven that Spirit, who is ever ready to cleanſe and SANCTIFY the heart of every one of us, as an altar, fit to offer up that living ſacrifice, which is acceptable unto GOD, and our reaſonable ſervice. Now the great offence which is here declared, to have, above all others, an immediate, neceſſary tendency to fruſtrate this mighty work and labour of divine Love, ſhould, by a careful compariſon of ſpiritual things with ſpiritual—for it is purely and altogether a doctrine of *revealed* Religion—be ſo explained, that neither the pious, melancholy

melancholy Chriſtian ſhould have reaſon to *deſpair*, nor the preſumptuous, daring ſinner be encouraged. SERM. II.

In order to this end, I ſhall obſerve the following method:—

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour fully and clearly to explain the nature of the offence here ſpecified, and to point out wherein the peculiar malignity of it conſiſts.

Secondly, I ſhall enquire on *what account* it is, that the blaſphemy againſt the HOLY GHOST is declared to be above all other ſins, incapable of pardon:— After which,

In the third and laſt place, I ſhall offer a ſuitable application to ourſelves. And may GOD, who "as at this time did "teach the hearts of his faithful people, "by ſending to them the light of his "Holy Spirit; grant us by the ſame "Spirit to have a right judgement in *this*,

SERM. II. "and all other things, which belong to "our eternal Salvation!"

"The blaſphemy againſt the HOLY "GHOST ſhall not be forgiven unto men." The occaſion of which aweful words was this:

Our bleſſed Lord having caſt out a devil, and by a power evidently ſupernatural *healed* the diſeaſed perſon, ſo that he who had been dumb and blind, inſtantly both ſaw and converſed: the generality of the people, convinced by the greatneſs of the miracle, began to declare their belief that he muſt be "that "Saviour who ſhould come into the "world." Upon which, certain Phariſees, who were part of his audience, hardened by their malice and hypocriſy, beyond all poſſibility of conviction, intimated that perhaps what CHRIST had performed might be owing to ſome aſſiſtance he had received from evil ſpirits. "He doth not caſt out devils (ſay they) "but

"but by Beelzebub the Prince of Devils." To deny that the miracle was really performed, was too impudent and abandoned even for them. Nothing but the conſummate arrogance and fooliſhneſs of *modern* infidelity—*philoſophy*, it ſeems, we are to call it—ever preſumed to ſuggeſt this. The *effect* was clear, evident, notorious, and indiſputable; the *means* therefore, they with more ſubtilty, and equal malice, ventured to traduce; and theſe they thought fit to repreſent as *diabolical*: leaving the miracles themſelves but ſtill farther confirmed by this very mode of objecting to them. To evince the monſtrous abſurdities of this inſinuation, our divine teacher argues, that common ſenſe muſt ſuggeſt, that whatever is done by confederacy with *Satan*, muſt be ſomething that *promotes* the intereſts of his kingdom; and not any thing directly contrary to it; unleſs you can bring yourſelves to ſuppoſe that a ſociety can be ſtrengthened and ſupported

SERM. II.

SERM. II.

by *diviſions* within itſelf. "But every "kingdom divided againſt itſelf (ſays he) "is brought to deſolation; and every city "or houſe divided againſt itſelf, ſhall not "ſtand." As therefore caſting out devils profeſſedly to prove a doctrine directly contrary to the intereſts of the Devil, is evidently an act not to be performed by confederacy with *him*;—nothing therefore can be imagined more abſurdly malicious than this your attempt to evade the conviction of my miracles. You have this moment, with your own eyes, beheld me performing a work, which it is impoſſible, you all acknowledge, for mere unaſſiſted man to perform. I muſt therefore have ſome power delegated to me from a *ſuperior* being. You have a proverbial ſaying amongſt you—"He that is not with me, "is againſt me, and he that gathereth not "with me, ſcattereth abroad." That is, when two perſons of great eminence are at open and irreconcileable enmity; if even he who only forbears declaring himſelf

ſelf to be on the one ſide, is thereupon reputed to be on the other; how much more ought ye to believe that I who have *actually done* ſo much, towards deſtroying the power and defeating the malice of the Devil, am really and in truth acting in oppoſition to him! Yes, every thing I ſay; every thing I do, is directly contrary to his intereſts, and proclaims me his moſt determined irreconcileable enemy. Can you then, with the leaſt pretence to reaſon and common ſenſe—will you ſuppoſe that the power which I have now, and at *all* times, *thus* exerted, can be derived to me from Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils? "If Satan caſt out Satan, he is divided "againſt himſelf; how then ſhall his "kingdom ſtand?" If not by ſuch means, then it neceſſarily follows, that my power muſt be derived from ſome *other* ſource; and this, I will prove to a demonſtration, is no other than GOD himſelf. For as a perſon's entering into a ſtrong man's houſe and forcibly diſpoſſeſſing him of his goods is

SERM. II.

SERM. II.

an infallible evidence, that he who ſo enters is ſtronger and comes with greater authority than he who had the firſt poſſeſſion; ſo my breaking the power of devils, by caſting them out of the *bodies*, and deſtroying their dominion over the *minds* of men, is an undeniable proof of my being ſent by a power and authority ſuperior to theirs;—namely, that of GOD himſelf. Now "if I caſt out devils by "the Spirit of GOD, then certainly and "demonſtrably the Kingdom of GOD is "come upon you."

This is the concluſion, which you cannot but be conſcious, you ought in all reaſon to have immediately made. But as inſtead of this, you have thought fit to attribute my miracles to the power of Satan —this blaſphemy againſt the HOLY GHOST, calling *his* works, the works of Beelzebub, the Prince of Devils—is an evidence of ſuch inveterate wickedneſs, conſummate malice, and invincible obſtinacy, that it *cannot*, and I ſolemnly pronounce

nounce it, "*ſhall* not be forgiven unto "you, neither in this world, neither in the "world to come." SERM. II.

The blaſphemy againſt the HOLY GHOST therefore evidently conſiſted in this—in aſcribing thoſe mighty works which they ſaw JESUS CHRIST perform by the *finger of* GOD, to the agency of *the Devil*. This I conceive muſt be ſo obvious to every one who attentively examines our Saviour's diſcourſe and arguments on the occaſion, that he will admit the nature of the ſin cannot *otherwiſe* be conſiſtently determined and aſcertained. But that there might not remain the leaſt ſhadow of doubt or uncertainty in a matter of ſuch infinite importance, which would naturally engage the attention of many ſerious and timorous Chriſtians—St. Mark in the 30th verſe of the 3d chapter of his Goſpel has told us, in ſo many words that this was preciſely the blaſphemy againſt the HOLY GHOST. "Verily I ſay unto you "all ſins ſhall be forgiven unto the ſons of "men,

SERM. II.

"men, and blaſphemies wherewith ſoever "they ſhall blaſpheme: But he that ſhall "blaſpheme againſt the HOLY GHOST, "hath never forgiveneſs, but is in danger "of eternal damnation:" "Becauſe (he "immediately adds) they ſaid, he hath an "unclean ſpirit."

I ſhall only obſerve upon the whole, that not being *ourſelves* witneſſes of the miracles of JESUS CHRIST, it ſeems pretty certain that *we* cannot at the preſent day be guilty of this unpardonable ſin; at leaſt we cannot now offend in the ſame way, and with the ſame aggravated circumſtances of malice and obſtinacy as the Phariſees did. It is however equally certain, and the character of the times calls upon me to recommend it to your ſerious conſideration, that ſtanding out againſt and finally rejecting ſuch miracles as are ſufficiently atteſted, is a very dangerous and alarming approach towards it; and to continue impenitent under the faith confirmed by them is virtually to

oppoſe

oppoſe them. St. Paul has therefore aſſured us, "if we ſin *wilfully*, after that we have "received the knowledge of the truth, "and have had the Goſpel of CHRIST "put into our hands—there remaineth no "more ſacrifice for ſin." And again; "it is impoſſible for thoſe, who were once "enlightened, and have taſted of the Hea- "venly Gift, and were made partakers "of the HOLY GHOST, and have taſted "the good Word of GOD, and the powers "of the world to come; if they ſhall fall "away, it is impoſſible to renew them "again unto repentance." And this ſuggeſts what I propoſed enquiring, SERM. II.

In the ſecond place;—whence it proceeds, that this ſin is declared to be, above all others, incapable of pardon. And the reaſon of this cannot be difficult, if we recollect that the Scripture every where aſſures us, our ſins can only be pardoned through the merits and ſufferings of JESUS CHRIST; which are to be applied by our own ſincere

SERM. II.

ſincere faith and repentance. Now this ſin againſt the HOLY GHOST does, in its own nature, abſolutely preclude thoſe, who are guilty of it, from all poſſibility of uſing the means, which are neceſſary to produce theſe indiſpenſible qualifications. "It is "impoſſible (ſays St. Paul) to renew ſuch "perſons again unto repentance; to ſuch, "therefore, there remaineth no more ſacri- "fice for ſin." And why? Becauſe, when men obſtinately and wilfully reject the overtures of Grace made to them in the Goſpel, and return it upon GOD's hands as a thing not worth their acceptance in compariſon with the pleaſures of ſin; when they contemptuouſly deride and vilify the atonement made by CHRIST, and continually turn their backs on the bread of life; to them the Blood of the Covenant is altogether *unprofitable*; and at the ſame time, there is no other method left whereby they can poſſibly obtain remiſſion of their ſins, and be admitted to the Divine Favour. We are well aſſured

SERM. II.

that "No man cometh to the Father but "by *him*; neither is there Salvation in "any other; for there is none other name "under Heaven given amongſt men "whereby we can be ſaved, but that of "JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth."

Beſides, he that thus perverſely and maliciouſly oppoſeth the truth, muſt, upon the ſame grounds, *unavoidably continue* in the oppoſition; becauſe there are no new methods left to be tryed for his conviction. If GOD ſhould ſend a perſon immediately from Heaven on purpoſe to convince him of his error, he can give no greater teſtimony of his coming from GOD, than miracles. And if when GOD enables him to work ſuch, by the power of his Spirit, that man will obſtinately impute them to the power of the Devil; he defeats all the imaginable means of his own conviction. That ſin therefore is in its *own nature* unpardonable which fruſtrates the laſt and utmoſt means which GOD hath ever yet thought fit to uſe to bring

SERM. II.

bring men to repentance and ſalvation. It is true GOD can by the operations of his Spirit if he pleaſe beſtow upon men ſuch grace, as ſhall triumph *irreſiſtibly* over their unbelief and hardneſs of heart. But this is contrary to his uſual and eſtabliſhed method of dealing with his creatures. Becauſe, whenever free agency is entirely ſuperſeded, our acts, from that moment, ceaſe to be moral or religious acts; and virtue and vice, impoſed by abſolute neceſſity, loſe their very nature and eſſential difference. On ſuch miſrepreſentations of the effects of the Spirit, is built that moſt abſurd and fatal doctrine of inſtantaneous converſions from a life of univerſal licentiouſneſs, to a ſtate of unſinning obedience. Hence too, we have thoſe among us, who pretend to aſſign the very place, and hour, when by a ſudden illapſe, they felt themſelves ſealed by the Holy Spirit of GOD, unto the day of redemption.

In this condition a reaſonable creature, diveſted of liberty and free-will, is degraded

graded into a mere *paſſive machine*, not accountable for his own actions. And hence, men are encouraged to perſiſt in their darling follies, without one honeſt effort for reformation, under pretence of waiting for that good time, when they ſhall find themſelves *compelled* to Goſpel righteouſneſs, and inſenſibly borne away, with folded arms, as it were, to the boſom of their Redeemer. Whereas, in fact, the ſpirit of ſanctification is at all times, and in all places, both able and willing to aſſiſt every ſincere and impartial man; and in a more peculiar manner during our celebration of the offices of public religion; and eſpecially thoſe of baptiſm, confirmation, and the venerable Sacrament of CHRIST's Body and Blood; ever ſuggeſting to us our duty, and enabling, and ſoliciting us to perform it. We are however ſtill left at full liberty either to follow or refuſe; if we refuſe and reſiſt his motions, we are *undone* by our own free choice, and the wilful obſtinacy of our corrupt hearts. So

SERM. II.

that

SERM. II.

So that you ſee both the *enthuſiaſt*, and the *infidel* are without excuſe, and the Spirit of GOD is free from the blood of all men. Beſides; what right can ſuch perſons have to expect ſo extraordinary a favour? when if they can properly be ſaid to deſerve any thing from GOD's hands, it is that he ſhould totally withdraw from them that grace, which they have already wilfully abuſed, and give them up intirely to the ſuggeſtions of their own reprobate minds; whereby they will naturally be engaged in a farther oppoſition to truth, till they are at length ſealed up to inexorable vengeance. "His ſpirit will not always ſtrive with "man." And if we admit that any thing may provoke him juſtly to withdraw it, it muſt certainly be a wilful and malicious oppoſition in faith and practice to the utmoſt evidence that can be given to the truth of Religion. If he that "deſpiſed "Moſes's law died without mercy, of how "much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, "ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath "trodden

"trodden under foot the Son of GOD, and "hath counted the Blood of the Covenant "wherewith he was ſanctified an unholy "or unneceſſary thing, and hath done "deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace?". St. John calls this heinous offence, *a ſin unto death*, and ſeems to diſcourage us even from praying for ſuch as are fallen into it—as if their condition was abſolutely and irretrievably deſperate. "If any man "ſee his brother ſin a ſin, *not* unto death, "he ſhall aſk; and he ſhall give him life, "for thoſe that ſin *not* unto death. There "*is* a ſin *unto death*; I do not *ſay that he* "*ſhall pray for it*."—Plainly intimating that it is both beyond the power and intention even of prayer itſelf. SERM. II.

And now what remains, but that we make a ſuitable and ſerious application of theſe reflections to ourſelves?

And ſurely it muſt afford us all an inexhauſtible fund of conſolation to reflect, that it is abſolutely impoſſible for *us* to fall into, or commit this ſin againſt the

SERM. II.

HOLY GHOST, in the ſame manner, and with the ſame aggravating circumſtances as the Phariſees did of old. And this being a ſin of ſo peculiarly heinous a nature, and declared by our Bleſſed Lord to be utterly unpardonable, we ſhould be extremely cautious how we preſume to extend it, either with reſpect to ourſelves or neighbours, beyond the caſe to which *he* applies it—reſiſting the evidence of the miracles which were wrought for the Truth of Chriſtianity, by thoſe who were themſelves *eye-witneſſes* of them; that is, by thoſe who had the utmoſt aſſurance that human nature is capable of. Nay it was not only a bare reſiſtance of the evidence, but with this moſt aggravating and malicious circumſtance—imputing thoſe very works which they knew and were ſure muſt be wrought by the HOLY GHOST, to the power of the Devil. Such was the enormous ſin of the Phariſees, and I think, we may venture to pronounce of them *alone*.

It

SERM. II.

It however infinitely imports us to conſider—and the aſtoniſhing proneneſs of the preſent times to ſcepticiſm, infidelity, and irreligion, obliges me to recommend it to your moſt ſerious conſideration—although to *us* who live at this diſtance of time, the evidence of facts cannot perhaps be ſo perfectly clear as to thoſe, who were themſelves, eye-witneſſes and ear-witneſſes of them; yet if they are *ſo* atteſted that no ſincere impartial inquirer, can in the leaſt queſtion the truth of them—whether, I ſay, rejecting—maliciouſly and obſtinately rejecting by a life of irreligion—this evidence, which is all that the nature of the thing is capable of, be not ſuch an approach towards this great offence, as "ſhall not be forgiven unto men." In ſome reſpects we may ſeem even to have the advantage over the contemporaries of our Redeemer, in point of certainty of our not being deceived. For beſides that we are now free from many of thoſe inveterate prejudices, which both Jews and

SERM. II.

Gentiles then laboured under; and which we cannot aſſure ourſelves we ſhould have leſs obſtinately adhered to, than they did; we have what they could not have—we have the concurrent examination of many ages, and the advantage of conſidering and comparing the objections of adverſaries on all ſides. We have the additional proofs ariſing from the *continued* efficacy of that Holy Spirit (who as on this day viſibly deſcended on the Apoſtles.) We have ſeen the truth of their doctrine illuſtriouſly confirmed by the accompliſhment of ſeveral prophecies: by the total deſtruction of Jeruſalem—by the final diſperſion of the whole nation of the Jews—by the incredible ſucceſs, and univerſal propagation of the Goſpel over all the world.

Now theſe additional confirmations of the truth of the Chriſtian Religion—theſe evidences of its infinite importance and abſolute neceſſity—muſt be a proportionable aggravation of the guilt of infidelity

and

SERM. II.

and irreligion in thoſe who, notwithſtanding every reaſonable proof, yet obſtinately reject the counſel of GOD againſt themſelves, by perſiſting to diſbelieve, or (which is much the ſame thing) by diſobeying the doctrines of the Goſpel. Upon this foundation it is that the Apoſtle ſo ſolemnly condemns the ſin of rejecting Chriſtianity, and with ſuch peculiar emphaſis cautions us againſt it. "See (ſays the Apoſtle) "that ye refuſe not him that ſpeaketh; "for if they eſcaped not, who refuſed him "that ſpake on *earth*, much more ſhall "not we eſcape, if we turn away from "him that ſpeaketh from Heaven."—And again; "If the word ſpoken by "Angels was ſtedfaſt, and every tranſ-"greſſion and diſobedience received a juſt "recompence of reward; how ſhall *we* "eſcape, if we neglect ſo great Salvation, "which at the firſt began to be ſpoken "by the Lord, and was confirmed unto "us by them that heard him: GOD alſo "bearing them witneſs both with ſigns

SERM. II.

"and wonders, and with diverſe mira-
"cles." Now to reject thoſe miracles thus wrought for the confirmation of Chriſtianity, and brought down to us by the moſt credible hiſtory—an evidence which we never ſcruple to accept in matters where we have no prejudice or intereſt to the contrary—is an argument of ſuch wilful infidelity—ſuch invincible obſtinacy and hardneſs of heart—ſuch a total diſregard of all Religion—that it is much to be feared the condition of him who is actuated by it, is equally *deſperate* with that of the ancient Phariſees, who "will not be forgiven, neither in this "world, neither in the world to come."

Let us therefore with ceaſeleſs adoration beg of him, who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleaſure, to give us Grace to "caſt down all "our vain imaginations, and every high "thing within us that exalteth itſelf "againſt the knowledge of GOD, and to "bring

"bring into captivity every thought to SERM. II.
"the obedience of CHRIST!"

To whom, with the Father and HOLY GHOST, *be rendered, &c.*

SERMON III.

FAITH AND WORKS.

SERMON III.

FAITH AND WORKS.

SERMON III.

And pray ye, that your flight be not in the Winter.

Mark xiii. 18.

SERM. III.

THERE ſeems to have been an opinion fondly indulged among the generality of the Jewiſh people—conſiſtent enough with that national *pride*, which forms ſo ſtriking a feature of their character—that the Temple at Jeruſalem, that glory of the whole earth, ſhould continue undefaced till the conſummation of all things.

When therefore our Bleſſed Lord foretold the total demolition of that magnificent edifice, inſomuch that one ſtone ſhould not be left upon another; we immediately

SERM. III.

immediately find them propoſing ſuch queſtions, as evidently prove they conceived it to amount to a prophecy of the laſt day. For the ſacred hiſtorians inform us, that CHRIST having aſcended the Mount of Olives, and placed himſelf over againſt the Temple, four of his Diſciples—impatient of *uncertainty* in an event of ſuch intereſting importance—"came unto him privately, ſaying, tell "us when ſhall theſe things be? and "what ſhall be the ſign of thy coming, "and of the *end of the world.*"

As this innocent prepoſſeſſion had excited in them an uncommon degree of ſerioufneſs and ſolicitude, highly ſerviceable to the purpoſes of holy inſtruction; he did not think fit to contradict it: but returns an anſwer applicable to both events. To the latter part of their queſtion, which relates to the *ſigns* that ſhould precede the accompliſhment of his prophecy; he tells them there ſhould be a multitude of *falſe* prophets—or enthuſiaſtic preachers; who would

SERM. III.

would ſtrenuouſly endeavour to ſeduce them from the true religion, "deceiving "(if it were poſſible) the very elect.— "That they ſhould hear of wars, and "rumors of wars—that nation ſhould "riſe againſt nation, and kingdom againſt "kingdom—that there ſhould be earth- "quakes in diverſe places—famine, plague, "and peſtilence. Nay, that the brother "ſhould betray the brother, and the father "the ſon, and that children ſhould even riſe "up againſt their parents—that in general, "an extreme corruption of manners ſhould "prevail, and an irreſiſtible torrent of "every ſpecies of vice."

As to the other part of the Diſciples' enquiry—the preciſe diſtance of time, when theſe events ſhould take place; he anſwers them, "of that day and that hour "knoweth no man, no not the Angels, "which are in Heaven, neither the Son "himſelf—conſidered merely in his human "nature—but the Father only. For as "in the days, that were before the flood,

"mankind

SERM. III.

"mankind notwithſtanding the frequent, "ſolemn warnings of Noah, obſtinately "perſiſted in their irreligious and ſenſual "practices, and, utterly unawed by the "dreadful deſtruction that hung over "their heads, were in the very moment "big with the fate of human nature, "thoughtleſly marrying and giving in "marriage—luxuriouſly eating and drink-"ing—indulging in every ſpecies of "ſenſuality, till the flood came and took "them all away: *ſo* ſhall the coming of "the Son of Man be." Sudden and unexpected by carnal and worldly-minded men, ſhould be the thunder and lightning of Almighty Wrath. Such men muſt wait for conviction till they actually ſee and feel the univerſal tribulation of thoſe days, "when the ſun ſhall be darkened, "and the moon ſhall not give her light, "when the ſtars ſhall fall from Heaven, "and their injured and deſpiſed Redeemer, "attended by his holy Angels, ſhall come "in

"in the clouds of Heaven, with infinite "power and inſufferable glory.

An uſe every way worthy of that moſt benevolent commiſſion with which he was inveſted, he proceeds to make of this uncertainty as to the exact period of thoſe occurrences: ſolemnly and pathetically enjoining them, that ſince they were only ignorant *when* they ſhould come to paſs, but not that they aſſuredly muſt, one time or other; they would therefore immediately reſolve by a conſtant, habitual attention to their duty towards GOD and man, to be at *all* times *prepared*; never liable to be ſurprized unawares. "Take ye heed, "watch and pray, for ye know not when "the time is." To pray without watching or exerting our own perſonal vigilance and care, is indolently and unwarrantably to rely upon GOD; to watch without praying is to confide too much in one's own ſelf. The former alone is but ſplendid hypocriſy, the latter an impious preſumption. Our Divine Teacher hath therefore

SERM. III. joined them together, ſolemnly exhorting all his Diſciples to both.

A direction as to the particular object of their prayers, is contained in thoſe very remarkable words, which I have ſelected for my text—"Pray ye, that your flight "be not in the winter."

The application of this Scripture to the original occaſion of the divine conference—the utter demolition of the temple and city of Jeruſalem—is obvious and evident. It ſerves to ſhadow out what would be the helpleſs and hopeleſs condition of the Jews when they ſhould be beſieged by the Roman armies: who were inſtruments in the hand of the moſt high GOD utterly to extirpate that obſtinate and incorrigible nation for their abominable infidelity and diſobedience. CHRIST himſelf had preached, had prophecied, had wept over the devoted city, in vain. Their deſtruction was now inevitable. He ſpeaks not therefore, of their *defending* themſelves, of their reſiſtance, but of

that

that laſt effort of deſpair—their eſcape. SERM. III.
"Pray ye that your FLIGHT——"

The very attempt to effect this, and to preſerve themſelves and their tender, fainting offſpring, without habitation or covering, expoſed to all the fury of the elements in that inclement ſeaſon, when, as holy Job expreſſes it, "GOD thundereth marvel-"louſly with his voice, ſaying to the "ſnow, be thou upon the earth, likewiſe "to the ſmall rain, and to the great rain "of his ſtrength; when he ſealeth up the "hand of every man, diminiſheth his "natural ſtrength;"—muſt, without a miracle, be little leſs than flying from a ſudden, to a lingering and more painful death—a death by cold and famine! Yes! in thoſe dreary days, "when GOD giveth "ſnow like wool, and ſcattereth the hoar "froſt like aſhes, when he caſteth forth "his ice like morſels, and none is able to "abide the power of his froſt;" the woe denounced againſt thoſe, who give ſuck in thoſe days, and are driven out, to lead

SERM. III.

forth their children, amidſt a bloody and mercileſs enemy, to ſeek their bread in deſolate places; muſt be written on the heart of every benevolent being.

But pregnant with ſorrow and deſpair as ſuch a ſcene may be eaſily repreſented, there is another, my brethren, to which the words, in their ſecond ſenſe, are applicable, as much ſuperior in both, as infinite is to finite—eternity to time;—it is that of a thoughtleſs ſinner, overtaken by the day of judgement, and cut off while he is utterly unprepared for his accompt, perhaps in the very act of offending GOD. Conceive an immortal ſoul in the unutterable agony and deſpair of ſuch a condition, trembling before the tribunal of Omnipotence; expecting every moment that irreverſible ſentence, which muſt conſign him over to inexorable vengeance for ever:—Reflect that ſuch a caſe, may without timely repentance be your own; and you will then ſee and feel the mighty import of the words—the unſpeakable neceſſity of praying.

praying, that your flight from this world be not in that *ſpiritual* winter, when your heart is *cold* to the intereſts of virtue, *frozen* againſt the Love of GOD, and *barren* of the *fruits* of righteouſneſs. SERM. III.

The frequent alluſions throughout every part of the Sacred Writings to rural life and the *vegetable* creation, particularly in thoſe beautiful compariſons of the Church to a *Vineyard*, the men of Judah to the pleaſant *plant*, immorality to ſour *grapes*, the ſincere Chriſtian to the *tree* that bringeth forth *good fruits*, the day of judgement to an *harveſt*; together with thoſe expreſſions of the *ſeed* of the word, the *fruits* of the Spirit, and innumerable others that may be adduced, I conceive will juſtify ſuch an explication of that figurative term, in the text—*the winter*, as applied to our *moral* or religious ſtate. It muſt evidently be that uncomfortable ſeaſon, when the thick *clouds* of our ſins have hid us from the warmth of the *Sun* of Righteouſneſs, when our charity to man

SERM. III.

and love of GOD are waxed cold, when the *vegetation* of the *fruits* of Grace within us, like that of *nature*, is abſolutely ſuſpended, perhaps frozen to the root. And ſuch ſeems to be the meaning of that allegorical deſcription of the Church's *glory* in the Song of Solomon: "Lo the "*winter* is paſſed, the rain is over and "gone, the flowers appear on the earth— "the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, "and the vines with the tender grape give "a good ſmell."

The integrity of the metaphor is likewiſe remarkably preſerved in that addreſs of the Baptiſt to the Phariſees and Sadducees —"bring forth *fruits* meet for repentance; "every tree that bringeth not forth good "fruit is hewn down and caſt into the "fire." And our Saviour ſpeaking of falſe prophets, tells us we ſhall "know "them by their fruits." And he proceeds to interrogate, "do men gather grapes of "thorns, or figs of thiſtles?" So St. Paul, in his Epiſtle to the Coloſſians, prays

prays not only, that they may be filled with the knowledge of GOD's will; but that they may walk *worthy* of the Lord unto all pleaſing, being *fruitful* in every good work. And writing to the Corinthians, he repreſents their charitable contributions to the poor, as "a *ſeed* that is "*ſown*, and increaſing the *fruits* of their "righteouſneſs." Again; "I have "*planted*, Apollos *watered*, but GOD "gave the *increaſe*:"—that is, it is by GOD's grace alone that you are enabled to ſhow by your life and converſation the efficacy of that faith, which we have taught. Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos? an undervaluing mode of expreſſion, to ſhow the *nothingneſs* of their labour—mere faith—for he immediately adds, "they were only miniſters by whom "they *believed*," which ſhould perfect the work being the effect of GOD's free Grace in an honeſt and good heart. Hence that explanatory exhortation, "Let "us not be weary in WELL DOING; for

SERM. III.

SERM. III.

"in due ſeaſon we ſhall *reap* if we faint "not."

Now from theſe plain texts, it muſt appear, that by the *fruits* here ſpoken of, we are to underſtand the works of practical morality, and of perſonal virtue: in the language of our 12th Article of Religion —"*Good works*, which are the fruits of "faith: by which a *lively* faith, that "faith which is available to Salvation, may "be as evidently known, as a tree diſcerned "by the fruit."

Conſider then, my brethren, how dreadfully, how deplorably, thoſe poor ſouls are deluded who truſt to be ſaved by the merits of JESUS CHRIST, without a ſuitable holineſs of converſation! who live and dye in that very ſtate of *coldneſs* and *unfruitfulneſs*, which he hath himſelf with ſuch holy ſolicitude taught us to depreçate. —"Pray ye, that your flight be not in the "winter. For then (as he proceeds) ſhall "be great tribulation; ſuch as was not "ſince the beginning of the world, to "this

"this time, no, nor ever ſhall be."— Words too ſtrong to expreſs any mere *temporal* calamity. Remember too, his typical curſe of the barren fig-tree. SERM. III.

Faith cometh by *hearing*, and is indeed the principle or *ſeed* of eternal life; but unleſs this ſeed be diligently cultivated, warmed, and cheriſhed in our hearts, that it may take root downwards and bear fruit upwards, to the Glory of GOD and advantage of our fellow-creatures, it is abſolutely *dead* to all the purpoſes of Salvation. For as the Apoſtle has elegantly and forcibly illuſtrated this great doctrine; "as the earth which drinketh in the rain, "that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth "forth *herbs* meet for them, by whom "it is dreſſed, receiveth bleſſing from "GOD, ſo that which beareth thorns and "briars *only*, is rejected, and nigh unto "curſing; whoſe end is to be burned."

The day of every man's death is, as to that individual, to all intents and purpoſes, the end of the world. Since whatever

SERM. III.

length of time may intervene, judgement will find him exactly in the ſame moral ſtate and condition as death left him. "As "the tree falleth ſo ſhall it lye." The firſt great object of Religion being to reſtore us to a ſimilitude of the Divine Nature—that is, of its *moral* perfections; what can it avail us to plead in the day of trial the ſincerity of our faith?

It has indeed been inſiſted, that faith is neceſſarily productive of the fruits of righteouſneſs; but this is not only contrary to every man's experience, but to the expreſs teſtimony of the HOLY GHOST. He tells us, that "the *devils* believe and tremble;" and St. Paul ſtates a caſe, ſuppoſing a man to have every poſſible ſpecies and degree of faith—"to have *all* faith, even "to the removing of mountains, and to the "working of the moſt ſtupendous miracles, "and yet that this faith may be ſo deficient "in its moral operation, as to profit him "nothing."

Now

SERM. III.

Now as of that day, and that hour, when we may be ſummoned to our accompt, knoweth no man; if it ſhould be your misfortune to depart ſuddenly from the world, and in a cold ſtate of immorality, to have your flight in the winter; —O, my brethren, let no man deceive you with vain words; for *you* are reſerved to all the anguiſh and tribulation, the horror, deſpair, and torment of that dreadful day, predicted by your Redeemer. "When "that *evil* ſervant ſhall ſay in his heart, "my Lord *delayeth* his coming, and ſhall "begin to ſmite his fellow-ſervants, and "to eat and drink with the drunken"— ſinking into ſenſuality, "the Lord of that "ſervant ſhall come, in a day when he "looketh not for him, and in an hour "that he is not aware of; and ſhall cut "him aſunder, and appoint him his "portion with the hypocrites; there ſhall "be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth."

It is confeſſed, that there are in the writings of St. Paul, many texts, which at firſt

SERM. III.

view, ſeem to favour this palatable doctrine of *Soliſidianiſm*, or juſtification by faith alone. Of theſe ſome unwary—I will not ſay *deceitful* teachers,—I judge no man—to their own maſter they ſtand or fall—of theſe ſome have availed themſelves, to invite the unthinking multitude to religion, by *eaſier* terms of Salvation than the eſtabliſhed Church could offer.

That I may not be thought to have been contending without an adverſary, give me leave to quote the written and printed words of one of them ſome time ſince deceaſed, "*I declare* (ſays he) *for being* "*juſtified by faith* ONLY." And another of ſuperior abilities affirms, "*the condition* "*of our juſtification is faith alone, and not* "*good works.*" And again, "*the moſt* "*deſtructive of all thoſe errors, that popery,* "*the mother of abominations hath brought* "*forth (compared to which even* TRANSUB-"STANTIATION *and a hundred more, are* "*trifles light as air) is, that we are juſtified* "*by works (or,* ſays he, *to expreſs the thing*

"*a*

"*a little more* decently) *by faith and* SERM. III.
"*works.*

But it has been demonſtrated that by faith, in the paſſages alluded to, St. Paul means the Chriſtian Religion in general, in oppoſition to that of Moſes; and conſequently that he includes *obedience* as well as belief. It follows therefore that the works by him decryed, are not the eternally neceſſary and immutable works of morality and virtue, but the *ceremonial* ordinances —the poſitive rites—the waſhings and pilgrimages of the law. This bodily labour indeed profiteth little; but Godlineſs or piety is profitable unto all things, having promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Let St. Paul alſo be permitted to ſpeak for himſelf. And can any words be more expreſs, plain, and intelligible than thoſe which he uſes in the third chapter of his Epiſtle to Titus? "Be ready to every "good work." And to exclude all poſſibility of miſtake, he tells us, both negatively

SERM. III.

tively and positively what he means by good works. "To speak evil of no man; "to be no brawler; not disobedient, serving "our lusts and pleasures; not living "in malice and envy, hateful and hating one "another: but to be purified by the wash- "ing of regeneration, and the renewing "of the HOLY GHOST." To which he presently adds these emphatical words;— "This is a faithful saying, and these "things I will that thou affirm constantly, "that they which have believed in GOD "might be careful to maintain good "works." And in the same Epistle he says, "that the Grace of GOD which "bringeth Salvation, teacheth us, that "denying ungodliness, and wordly lusts, "we should live soberly, righteously, and "godly in this present world, preparing for "that day of the glorious appearing of our "Saviour JESUS CHRIST;" the very aim and object of whose redemption, he tells us to have been this: "That he might redeem "us from all *iniquity*, and purify unto "himself

"himſelf a peculiar people zealous of "*good works*: that is, as he had before "explained himſelf, living *ſoberly, righ-* "*teouſly*, and *godly*." And he ſolemnly declares upon another occaſion, "that "without this holineſs no man ſhall ſee "the Lord." SERM. III.

If there be in this Apoſtle ſome things hard to be underſtood, the texts juſt repeated are on a level with the meaneſt capacity. And as it is itſelf evident truth, that Infinite Wiſdom cannot act inconſiſtently, or contradict itſelf; ſo if we believe that St. Paul was inſpired by that Spirit, it is demonſtrable that, whatever may be the meaning of thoſe obſcure paſſages, it cannot be this; that faith without the works of morality and virtue, was ſufficient to our juſtification. Indeed plain reaſon and common ſenſe revolt at the idea.

But the doctrine may remain as a mournful, and humiliating evidence, among a thouſand others, that there are reaſonable

SERM. III.

reaſonable creatures who will ſubſcribe to madneſs and abſurdity, rather than give up their boſom vices, or be diſturbed in their purſuit of the riches, honours, and pleaſures of the world. Nor is this the *only* inſtance, in which enthuſiaſm and infidelity have met together, and kiſſed each other.

And while there are ſuch poor deluded creatures among us, or teachers, who compaſs ſea and land to make them—ſeldom or never inſiſting on the neceſſity of perſonal virtue, or making that the criterion of regeneration and ſaving faith, but rather dwelling on certain inward, undefinable *experiences*, feelings, and aſſurances, and ſenſible inſtantaneous converſions—while there are thoſe, who are not afraid to exalt the Divine Mercy to the depreſſion of his Juſtice—almoſt turning the Grace of GOD into laſciviouſneſs, filling their harangues with ſurfeiting exclamations on the perſonal fulneſs and beauties of CHRIST, inſtead of re-

com-

commending the plain, neceſſary, ſocial duties of the Goſpel, and the confirmed, regular habit of induſtry, holineſs, and honeſty: while, I ſay, this is the caſe, diſcourſes of this kind can never be unſeaſonable. SERM. III.

Lay theſe things together; and you will not be ſurprized (notwithſtanding the firſt view of ſome of St. Paul's texts) when you hear St. James, who wrote by the ſame Spirit, ſo vehemently affirming, that "by works a man is juſtified, and not by "faith only—that faith if it have not "works is dead being alone." Think of that remarkable verſe in the Revelation of St. John, "Bleſſed are they that *do* his "commandments, that they may have "*right* to the Tree of Life." The Engliſh expreſſion is indeed too ſtrong; right of merit, GOD knows the holieſt and beſt of men never had—the original word is ἐξουσια, and ſhould be tranſlated *power*; they that do his commandments ſhall have *power* over the Tree of Life.

Upon

SERM. III.

Upon the whole, we muſt conclude that though faith in JESUS CHRIST be our right and title to immortal happineſs and glory; yet that we muſt be put into poſſeſſion of them by perſonal virtue and holineſs.

Such was the dying judgement of a great and eminent prelate of our own Church, after having ſpent the greateſt part of a long and learned *life* in reconciling the apparent differences in the writings of theſe two Apoſtles, and ſtating from them the terms of juſtification. Having received the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of his dear Redeemer; in the very hour while his immortal ſpirit was fluttering on the confines of eternity, he called his numerous and weeping family about him, and addreſſed them in this awful and affecting manner:

"I moſt firmly believe (ſaid he) that "as I yield a ſtedfaſt aſſent to the Goſpel "of CHRIST, and work out true re-"pentance by that faith, ſhaking off, by the

" the Grace of GOD, every deadly ſin, and " in earneſt devoting myſelf to the ob- " ſervation of his Evangelical Law; I " ſhall certainly obtain by the ſovereign " Mercy of GOD the Father, for the " merits only of JESUS CHRIST, his Son, " the full remiſſion and forgiveneſs of all " my paſt ſins. But then, my dear friends " and children, I have no otherwiſe any " confidence of pardon, or of being in a " ſtate of Grace and Salvation, but as by " a ſerious examination of my conſcience, " by the rules of the Goſpel, there ſhall " be evidence of the ſincerity of my faith " and repentance. SERM. III.

" I moreover believe, that while I not " only abſtain from thoſe crimes, which " according to the Scriptures exclude a " man from Heaven, but likewiſe dili- " gently exerciſe myſelf in good works, " both of piety towards GOD, and charity " towards my neighbours; ſo long I may " preſerve the Grace that is given me. " And that if I *dye in this ſtate*, I am in

SERM. III.

"the way of obtaining by it, the Mercy of "GOD, and eternal Life and Salvation "for the ſake of JESUS CHRIST. But I "know, I am always liable to fall away; "and after having received the HOLY "GHOST, may, as the Church ſpeaketh, "depart from Grace; that therefore I "ought to work out my Salvation with "fear and trembling. For I know and "remember (ſaid he—and may the awful truth ſink deep into the heart of every one of us) "I know and remember there is not "a ſingle promiſe any where to be found, "that GOD will indulge us with farther "ſpace of life, and time for repentance."

Such were the laſt words of that holy and eminently learned Biſhop, Dr. Bull; who was a light ſhining in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation. "And "as many as walk according to this rule, "peace ſhall be upon them and mercy, "for they are the Iſrael of GOD."

Pray ye, therefore—let us with ceaſeleſs adoration beſeech the Father of Mercies, that

that our *flight be not in* that *winter* of our ſouls, when the cares and pleaſures of this world have frozen our hearts againſt the religion of our Redeemer, when we are deſtitute of the *fruits* of righteouſneſs, and *cold* to the intereſts of holineſs and virtue.

Now to GOD *the Father, &c.*

SERMON IV.

DRUNKENNESS

EXPOSED AND CONDEMNED.

SERMON IV.

SERMON IV.

And be not drunk *with wine, wherein is excesſs.*

Epheſ. v. 18.

IN nothing is the infinite goodneſs and ineffable mercy of GOD towards his reaſonable creatures more conſpicuous, or more worthy of our admiration and love, than in this inſtance: that thoſe ſins, which by an eternal and irreverſible decree, muſt fix the great gulph betwixt us and immortal happineſs hereafter in Heaven, are generally attended with diſſatisfaction, inconvenience, and remorſe, here upon earth. And that as "the work of righteouſneſs "(in the language of the prophet) is, in

SERM. IV.

SERM. IV.

"the immediate execution, peace, and the "effect of righteouſneſs, quietneſs, and "aſſurance for ever;" ſo almoſt all *unrighteouſneſs* is an *enemy* to our nature, and inſeparably connected with its puniſhment. And this not only from a divine judgement, but from a neceſſary and unavoidable tendency in the very nature of things. That hence, perhaps, thoſe perſons, who are ſo far loſt to all ſenſe of Religion as not to be drawn to their duty by hopes of Heaven, or fears of Hell, may be furniſhed with *other*, and with them, more *powerful* arguments, to induce them to "live ſoberly, "righteouſly, and godly in this preſent "world."—That their ſin being plainly legible in their puniſhment, they may from thence conceive an averſion from it; and for the ſake of their own immediate ſelf-enjoyment, have recourſe to the practice of thoſe virtues, "whoſe ways "are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all whoſe "paths are peace."—"Godlineſs (ſays "St. Paul) is profitable unto all things,

"having promiſe of the life that now is:" and holy David obſerves, that "the voice "of joy and health is in the dwelling of "the righteous," but that "the wicked "ſhall not live out half his days."

Generally ſpeaking, whatſoever is *morally* evil, is alſo *naturally* ſo. Every ſin is, in ſome reſpect *contrary* to us. Some ſins are hurtful to our bodies, others to our minds; ſome impair our fortunes, others ruin our reputation. Some are extremely prejudicial in their own nature, and others are attended with the moſt alarming and fatal conſequences.

But of all the black catalogue of human vices, the moſt odious and deteſtable—the moſt dangerous to body and ſoul, and to every power and faculty of both, is *drunkenneſs*.—A vice ſo peculiarly bad in itſelf, and in its conſequences, ſo prejudicial to ſociety in general, and to thoſe who are addicted to it in particular—ſo inexpreſſibly frightful and ſurpriſing, baſe and infamous, that one would wonder how

SERM. IV.

how a reaſonable creature could ever ſuffer himſelf to ſink into it!

It is hardly poſſible even to ſpeak of it, with any tolerable degree of decency. But the neceſſity of the caſe muſt be my apology; and as long as there ſhall be ſuch a vice among thoſe who profeſs, and call themſelves Chriſtians; ſo long it is the bounden duty of the faithful Miniſter of CHRIST to expoſe its fatal malignity.

So infinitely odious and deteſtable did it render a man even in the opinion of heathens and idolaters, that the *Spartans* (a wiſe people among the ancients) thought it ſufficient to *expoſe* their *ſlaves*, when under its influence, to ſecure the riſing generation from all poſſibility of ever being guilty of it.

To apply to the *reaſon* of their youths only, they thought perhaps would not be altogether effectual; as there might be ſome among them, by whom their arguments might not be ſufficiently apprehended, or the impreſſion of them might be

be quickly effaced: but when they were made eye-witneſſes and ear-witneſſes of all the madneſs and abſurdities, and that more than *beaſtly ſtupidity* which the immoderate draught occaſioned; the idea of the vile change, they concluded, muſt be ſo fixed in their minds as to render them for ever after utterly averſe from the cauſe of it. And ſo inſeparably and immediately connected with its puniſhment is it to ſome men, that the ſevereſt penance that could poſſibly be enjoined them for their criminal exceſs, would be to oblige them to repeat it. It at one ſtroke, does the buſineſs of the moſt inveterate diſeaſe—"making the "whole head ſick, and the whole heart "faint."

SERM. IV.

Criminal therefore it evidently is, and that in the higheſt degree. For can any thing even be imagined, more diſpleaſing to Almighty GOD, than to abuſe thoſe creatures to the utter ruin of ourſelves and brethren, which he, in infinite goodneſs, intended for our comfort and ſupport?

SERM. IV.

But I am apprehenſive that this kind of reflections will make but little or no impreſſion on the abandoned and habitually intemperate. "They have made their "faces harder than a rock, and their hearts "are as an adamant ſtone." Let them however remember that this very *inſenſibility*, their hearing, unmoved, perhaps with a ſmile, the proteſts of reaſon and religion againſt them, is itſelf one of the moſt alarming conſequences of their crime; being at once an earneſt of their future and eternal reprobation, and the great obſtacle which prevents their return to a ſtate of pardon and peace.

Certain it is, that ſuch men will hardly be prevailed on to "ſuffer the wholeſome "word of admonition." They refuſe—in defiance of all authority, *divine*, as well as human—obſtinately refuſe to reſort to places of ſacred inſtruction. "They are "even in love with *darkneſs*, and come "not to the light leſt their deeds ſhould "be reproved." So far from it, that on the

the very day which is ſet apart for the worſhip of Almighty GOD, nay even during the appointed hours of prayer, they "aſſemble together by troops in houſes of "public entertainment," and are then moſt earneſtly buſied in ſtrengthening themſelves in wickedneſs, when they ought to be acquiring freſh ſupplies of divine Grace to guard them againſt it. The day of the Lord—perhaps the only ſeaſon of inſtruction for the lower ſet of people, is devoted to the ruin of their own immortal ſouls (thoſe ſouls for which the Son of GOD did and ſuffered ſo much) and to the enriching of the publican with the bread of an helpleſs and indigent family. SERM. IV.

If however, there be any ſuch among us, to them my indiſpenſable duty obliges me to addreſs myſelf. Permit me therefore, brethren, in the ſpirit of benevolence and love, to ſubmit a few plain queſtions to your ſerious conſideration. Are you not, from your own *experience*, convinced, that intemperance

SERM. IV.

intemperance and exceſſive drinking are the greateſt enemies to the health, the fortune, and the family of thoſe who are addicted to them?

Do they not always injure your character with every ſerious perſon—impair your underſtanding, and weaken your memory?

Do they not neceſſarily corrupt your *morals*, by promoting indecency and impurity, fooliſh talking and jeſting, ſcurrility and profaneneſs, curſing and ſwearing, the violation of the Sabbath, the neglect of GOD's worſhip, both public and private, and a contempt of, or at leaſt an utter indifference about all religion?

"*Look* not thou (ſays the wiſe King) "upon the wine when it is red, when it "giveth his colour in the cup, when it "moveth itſelf aright. At the laſt it "biteth like a ſerpent, and ſtingeth like "an adder."—"For thine eyes ſhall "behold ſtrange women, and thine heart "ſhall utter perverſe things." And the Prophet Iſaiah obſerves of ſuch men, that

"the

SERM. IV.

"the harp and the viol, the tabret and "wine are in their feaſts, but they regard "not the work of the Lord, neither conſi- "der the operation of his hands."

Does not the heat of liquor frequently occaſion ſtrife and contention, bitterneſs and railing, and ſometimes wounds and bloodſhed, and even murther itſelf?

Is it not attended with the diſturbance of the peace of ſociety, and the violation of all laws, divine as well as human?

"Who hath woe? (ſays Solomon) "Who hath ſorrow? Who hath conten- "tions? Who hath wounds? They that "tarry long at the wine, they that go to "ſeek mixed wine." And the wiſe ſon of Sirach aſſures us, that "wine drunk "with exceſs maketh bitterneſs of the "mind, with brawling and quarreling; "drunkenneſs encreaſeth the rage of a "fool till he offend: it diminiſheth "ſtrength and maketh wounds." And Eſdras, "that when they are in their "cups, they forget their love both to "friends

SERM. IV.

"friends and brethren, and a little after "draw out ſwords."

Is it not deſperately ſinful, extravagantly fooliſh, mad, and ſtupid—even beyond all names of ſtupidity, madneſs, and fooliſhneſs, that a being formed for immortality, created in the image of GOD, but little lower than the Angels, ſhould voluntarily forget his noble extraction, and the great end of his exiſtence; and by a life of ſenſual gratification degrade himſelf to a level even with the brute beaſts that have no underſtanding? Is not—I aſk—ſuch a conduct evidently as weak as it is wicked, and at once the object of pity, abhorence, and contempt?

Is not that man *ſhamefully prodigal*, who ſquanders away his TIME which was given him for the nobleſt purpoſes—to be employed in working out his eternal Salvation—and who makes thoſe things which were given to *preſerve* life, the very means of *deſtroying* it? "By ſurfeiting (ſays the "wiſe man) have many periſhed, but he "that

"that taketh heed—regulates his conduct "by the rules of temperance and ſobriety "—prolongeth his life." SERM. IV.

Again; are not the immediate effects of drunkenneſs, ridiculous grimaces, antic geſtures, and broken inarticulate ſentences, ſuch as become an ideot or a madman, rather than a reaſonable perſon? "They "have ſtricken me, thou ſhalt ſay, and I "was not ſick—They have beaten me, and "I felt it not: When ſhall I awake? I "will ſeek it yet again."

Once more; Does not the whole Law of GOD pronounce a moſt dreadful ſentence againſt thoſe who ſit long at the wine, and by their influence and example prevail upon others to drink to exceſs? "Woe unto "them (ſays the Lord by the mouth of his "Prophet Iſaiah) that riſe up early in the "morning that they may follow ſtrong "drink, that continue until night till "wine enflame them. Woe unto them "that are mighty to drink wine, and men "of ſtrength to mingle ſtrong drink!"

SERM. IV.

And again, by the Prophet Habakkuk—"Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour "drink, that putteſt thy bottle to him, "and makeſt him drunken alſo." Which laſt text muſt be underſtood as extending its condemnation not only to the drunkard himſelf, but to all thoſe who ſupply him with liquor in ſuch quantities as they know will intoxicate or inflame. The profits ariſing from ſuch practices are undoubtedly the wages of ſin, and will miniſter to their eternal condemnation.

Once more; does not the unerring Word of GOD place the drunkard amongſt the vileſt and moſt deteſtable of all offenders, and for ever exclude him from all poſſibility of future happineſs and Salvation? "Be not deceived (ſays the Apoſtle) "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor "adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuſers "of themſelves with mankind, nor thieves, "nor *drunkards* ſhall inherit the Kingdom "of GOD."

In

In one word; is the reputation of being what an unthinking profligate world calls a *good companion*, or the *pleaſure* of drinking, worthy to be purchaſed at the expence of his eaſe, his fortune, his health, his family, his fame, his underſtanding, his morals, his peace of conſcience here, and the hope of eternal Salvation hereafter? Who that is not totally loſt to every glimmering of reaſon and common ſenſe would (like the profane Eſau) ſell his right in the Kingdom of Heaven, which was purchaſed at no leſs a price than the Blood of the only-begotten Son of GOD, for the momentary gratification of an appetite ſomething worſe than beaſtly and deviliſh? Would any perſon, one degree removed from the verieſt madman, raging under a load of chains, ever be prevailed on to lift the poiſoned cup of exceſs to his lips; when he remembers, that all things conſpire to aſſure him that he endangereth thereby his own ſoul.

SERM. IV.

The Holy Scriptures tell us that when Judas had received the ſop, Satan immediately entered and took full poſſeſſion of him; and he, from that moment, became the moſt execrable monſter of wickedneſs that ever diſgraced human nature. So when the habitual drunkard has ſwallowed the intoxicating draught, immediately, as if actuated by all the powers of Hell at once, he becomes a ſworn foe to his GOD and his fellow-creatures—is neceſſarily *diſpoſed* to many crimes, and perfectly prepared for the greateſt.

"Take heed to yourſelves (ſays our Bleſſed Redeemer—and every day's experience ſhews us there was infinite occaſion for the caution) "take heed to yourſelves, "leſt at any time your hearts be over-"charged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs; "and ſo that day"—the great and terrible day of the Lord—"come upon you "unawares." Good GOD! To ruſh into the preſence of omnipotence, as ſome men have done, without one moment for recol-

lection or repentance—nay in and by the very act of offending him—the bare reflection is big with that complicated horror and diſtraction, which one might reaſonably conclude muſt reform the moſt abandoned ſinner! "Except (ſays the "ſame Divine "Teacher) your righteouſneſs exceed the "righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Pha-"riſees, ye ſhall in no wiſe enter into the "Kingdom of GOD." But if in ſpite of all the ſuperior advantages of inſtruction which we enjoy, it ſhould appear that our *unrighteouſneſs* exceedeth theirs (as in this particular it inconteſtibly does) alas, what condemnation ſhall furniſh an adequate puniſhment for our inexcuſable defection!

Thoſe who had only the light of Nature to go by—the very heathens—could tell us that drunkenneſs was the parent of every vice. That thoſe men who when intoxicated committed any other crime—ſo far from being pardoned—deſerved a double puniſhment; for that drunkenneſs was a *voluntary madneſs*. Nay there were

SERM. IV.

thoſe among them, by whoſe laws, if a chief magiſtrate was found intoxicated, he was to be immediately put to death. And therefore they juſtly thought that the moſt ſhameful reproach they could poſſibly caſt on any one was, to ſay he was laden with wine. It is indeed a vice at the firſt bluſh ſo peculiarly flagitious, that as no excuſes can extenuate it, ſo no aggravation can make it worſe. I affirm that no excuſes can extenuate it—and (I think) even the intemperate himſelf was never hardy enough to attempt a ſerious defence of it.

In vain does he plead the force of cuſtom, and the difficulty of diſcontinuing a confirmed habit, for as it is evidently ſinful, the longer he hath uſed himſelf to it, the greater therefore ſhould be his expedition, and the more earneſt his reſolutions to *forſake* it; leſt this difficulty ſhould at length amount to an impoſſibility. Wilful *perſeverance* in ſin is the greateſt aggravation of its guilt. If a reformation be difficult, it is however neceſſary. So

that the whole argument is reduced to this ſingle queſtion—whether we ſhall be uneaſy now, or miſerable, unſpeakably, infinitely miſerable to all eternity? SERM. IV.

But perhaps the intemperate may plead the influence of example—and tell us, that it is now almoſt univerſally eſtabliſhed as a decent and hoſpitable way of entertaining friends to be continually circulating the glaſs—or that he fears the imputation of covetouſneſs.

And if the nature of ſin could be altered, or its malignity leſſened by the number of thoſe who practice it, it is to be lamented that the former part of the excuſe might be admitted. But as we are expreſſly commanded by GOD himſelf not to follow a "multitude to do evil;" the queſtion again returns, whether drunkenneſs be *evil* or no? And if it be ſtill anſwered in the affirmative, as it for ever muſt, however ſupported by examples—Whether it be better in this caſe "to obey GOD or "man, judge ye." "I have written unto

SERM. IV.

"you (ſays the Apoſtle) not to keep com-
"pany, if any man that is called a brother
"be a drunkard, with ſuch an one no not
"to eat." And as to the imputation of covetouſneſs, frequent and ſeaſonable acts of charity to the poor, or generoſity to the afflicted and unfortunate will be an infallible ſecurity againſt that ſuſpicion.

But perhaps he may tell us, that by his ſtation in life, he is obliged to aſſociate, and converſe much with all ranks and degrees of people; and that to have thoſe ſeaſons of buſineſs or recreation enlivened with ſome exhilarating liquor is not, cannot be diſpleaſing to our merciful and indulgent Judge. No; let it be remembered, it is not the *uſe*, but the *abuſe* of GOD's creatures we are now condemning. And ſurely all the *honeſt* ends of converſation may be anſwered without intemperance—the tranſaction of buſineſs, the enjoyment of our friends, mutual information in matters of curioſity or importance, and refreſhment after the care and fatigue of the day.

day. And unleſs he can prove the contrary (which he never ſhall be able to do) this excuſe is altogether impertinent.

But *mirth* (he will tell you) muſt ſometimes be conſulted, and that from the frequent diſappointments of life, or the melancholy caſt of his own particular diſpoſition, he is under a neceſſity of calling in a foreign aid to ſupport his drooping ſpirits. Well; all this may readily be admitted. Let him only remember that it is *mirth* he is to provide for, and not madneſs; and that that can never be a remedy for care which multiplies the cauſes of it; and inſtead of *removing*, neceſſarily ſerves to inflame and perpetuate the diſeaſe.

Or he may tell us, that "a little wine "being neceſſary for his ſtomach's ſake, "and for his often infirmity"—he is overtaken before he is aware. This may be admitted as an allowable excuſe for three or four times in a man's life; but whether it can with common decency,

nay

SERM. IV.

nay without a manifeſt inſult to our underſtanding be offered again and again; let any one whoſe ſins have not got the better of his ſenſes—any one but the brutal drunkard himſelf—determine. It is a matter ſo extremely eaſy to ſeparate the *remedy* from the *exceſs*, that whoever is ſincerely *diſpoſed*, is *able* to effect it. And upon the whole it is evident, that all the excuſes which are uſed to palliate this moſt deſtructive practice are as weak as they are wicked; being the pitiful evaſions of the inſincere:—of ſuch as are willing to lay the blame of their enormities on any thing, rather than on what alone deſerves it—their own wicked and depraved inclinations.

"Every man that ſtriveth for the "maſtery (ſays St. Paul, alluding to thoſe athletic games and races which were celebrated among the Corinthians) "is temperate in all things," all cheerfully ſubmitting to the ſtricteſt abſtinence, and reſolutely denying themſelves their moſt beloved pleaſures,

pleaſures, to improve their perſonal ſtrength and activity. Now if theſe men could ſo eaſily prevail on themſelves to do all this merely *to obtain a corruptible crown* —a poor fading garland of leaves and flowers, the utmoſt reward that was to be expected: What excuſe can a Chriſtian poſſibly ſuggeſt, for giving himſelf up to the indulgence of his inordinate appetites? When beſides his own reaſon improved and fortified by the Word of GOD, he may only by aſking for it in faith and ſeriouſneſs, obtain the aſſiſtance of that Holy Spirit, who can do all things; and who moſt certainly will enable all that ſincerely deſire it, to ſubdue the moſt inveterate habits, and "ſo to run that they ſhall "infallibly obtain an incorruptible crown" of infinite happineſs and glory. But if in ſpite of all theſe conſiderations—in oppoſition to the dictates of his own reaſon—the laws of his country—the expreſs commands of GOD himſelf, and the honour of his Redeemer; the habitual drunkard is reſolved

SERM. IV.

ſolved ſtill obſtinately to perſiſt in his moſt abominable, wicked, and fooliſh practices —if neither a regard to his own eaſe, his health, his fortune, his family, his reputation, his underſtanding, his morals, the peace of his conſcience here, and the hopes of Salvation hereafter—if none, nor all of theſe will prevail on him to abſtain, repent, and amend, "neither would he "be perſuaded though one roſe from the "dead."

Now to GOD *the Father, &c.*

SERMON

SERMON V.

THE GREAT WICKEDNESS, AND SIN AGAINST GOD.

SERMON V.

THE GREAT WICKEDNESS

OF

SIN AGAINST GOD.

SERMON V.

—How then can I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt GOD *?*

Gen. xxxix. 9.

SERM. V.

AN exemption from the laws of morality and virtue, is the liberty of a *brute*. And yet, that this is what the modern votaries of *pleaſure* think themſelves unqueſtionably *entitled* to, is too evident, from their unmanly, barefaced licentiouſneſs; and utter impatience of all admonition and reproof. "Being paſt "feeling" (as the Apoſtle ſpeaks) or *acknowledging* moral obligations, "they have "given themſelves over unto *laſciviouſneſs*, "to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs" —alienated

SERM. V.

—alienated from the life, and plain intentions of their Creator.

For in our original nature, as it came from the hands of GOD, the human ſoul was ſolicitouſly attended by *modeſty* or *ſhame*, as by the ſpiritual watch-man or advanced guard; by which ſhe was inſtantly alarmed, at the firſt approach of any thing inconſiſtent with her dignity or her happineſs. That this is, at the preſent day rather a *diſcarded* and unfaſhionable virtue among us, is too notorious to be denied. Nay even of that amiable part of creation, in whom it was always eſteemed an endearing *ornament*—adding grace to grace, like apples of ſilver in pictures of gold—as well as an impregnable *ſafeguard*; ſome in the higher ranks of life eſpecially, may be thought to have forgot that injunction of the great Apoſtle: "Let the women adorn themſelves with "ſhamefacedneſs."

And whether this be the cauſe, or conſequence of thoſe frequent deplorable deviations

deviations from the paths of innocence and virtue, which diſgrace the modern profeſſors of our moſt holy and undefiled Religion; let thoſe whom a timely repentance has led to examine the ſtate of their ſouls, determine. SERM. V.

Thus much, however is certain from general obſervation, that unattended by this, perſonal beauty is oftentimes a *ſnare* to its poſſeſſor; the cauſe of irretrievable misfortune, perpetual ſorrow, and indelible infamy.

But ſince theſe *temporal* judgements, attendant on the works of the fleſh, have ſtill been found ineffectual preſervatives of the general purity; let the character of the times, and the *benevolence* of the undertaking, be my apology, for ſetting the terrors of the Lord in array before you, and earneſtly recommending it to all, whom it may concern, ſeriouſly to aſk their own ſouls,—How they can do ſuch great wickedneſs, "and ſin againſt GOD?"

SERM. V.

Such was the ſalutary expoſtulation of Joſeph, in a caſe of the moſt arduous difficulty, and violent temptation. It is recorded by the ſacred hiſtorian, in the ſixth verſe of this chapter, that Joſeph was a *goodly* perſon, and well-favoured. This unhappily engaged him the affection of his maſter's wife; who forgetting the duty, which ſhe had ſo ſolemnly vowed to her huſband, ſuffered her whole ſoul to be enſlaved to a baſe and vicious paſſion; and at laſt utterly diveſted herſelf of that modeſty, which is ſo evidently proper, and peculiarly natural to her ſex. Having once indulged the phrenzy, ſhe continually repeated her ſolicitations, grew more and more urgent and ſhameleſs—"ſpeaking to "him day by day."

But the honourable and virtuous youth was, *to the laſt*, enabled to *reſiſt* the temptation; leaving to poſterity an unanſwerable *refutation*, from certain fact and experience, of every argument and excuſe drawn from the mere violence of paſſion,

paſſion, and the frailty of our nature. We are aſſured by a witneſs of infallible veracity, that he "*refuſed*; and ſaid to "his maſter's wife: Behold, my maſter "wotteth not what is with me in the "houſe"—he has repoſed in me the moſt unlimited and generous confidence—"and "hath committed all that he hath to my "hand; there is none greater in this houſe "than I, neither hath he kept back any "thing from me, but thee, becauſe thou "art his wife." SERM. V.

He ſtarted back with horror at the infamous propoſal! alledges, in the moſt modeſt and reſpectful manner, the ſacred ties of gratitude to his maſter, and obedience to his God. The favours he had received from his benefactor and friend were ſo ſtrongly impreſſed on his ingenuous mind, that he regarded himſelf as the *ſworn protector* of his honour. He could not admit a thought of abuſing the familiarity he was indulged in, to that horrible, baſe, and unmanly degree, to become himſelf the

SERM. V.

inſtrument of his infamy; and injuring him—*irreparably injuring*—in the moſt ſerious manner, by thoſe very advantages, which he enjoyed by his unexampled generoſity.

Bluſh, ye modern pretenders to elevation of ſentiment!—theſe were the thoughts of a *man of honour* in thoſe early times, before *cuſtom* had uſurped the throne of *reaſon*, or male chaſtity was an object of ideot ridicule;—when it would have been regarded as an evidence of madneſs to ſuppoſe *honour* could exiſt with ingratitude and treachery; much more without mercy and common honeſty. To this he adds another neceſſary foundation of rational honour; the regard and reverence which he owed to the Supreme Being. He ſaw the right-aiming thunderbolt of Divine Vengeance levelled againſt premeditated adultery. "How "then could he do this great wickedneſs, "and ſin againſt GOD?"

If

SERM. V.

If it can be demonſtrated that every one among us, is, or may be, poſſeſſed of the ſame ſacred motives, *at leaſt*, which were effectual for the preſervation of this ingenuous youth; then muſt the *man of gallantry and intrigue*—for ſo, it ſeems, a corrupt world have agreed to call the horrid gratification of brutal appetite, at the expence of innocence and beauty—then muſt the *incontinent*, who attributes his enormities to the weakneſs of Nature and the ſtrength of paſſion, be abſolutely without excuſe. But this is ſo certain a truth, that we may ſafely reſt our proof of it in an appeal to the reports of their own conſcience, which, though "ſeared "with a hot iron," will not fail to teſtify, that if their *ſincerity* had been equal to their *abilities*, they might, in every inſtance, have eſcaped the pollutions of the world. That, in general, "there hath no tempta-"tion taken them, but ſuch as is common "to man; that their faithful GOD did "not ſuffer them to be tempted above

SERM. V.

"what they were able to bear; but did "with the temptation alſo make a way "for them to eſcape;" "where their "flight would have been victory, and their "fears a glorious triumph." It is blaſphemy but to ſuppoſe, that the Divine Providence ſhould ever reduce accountable creatures to a ſituation, in which ſo horrible a ſin is neceſſary and unavoidable. Henceforth therefore "let no man preſume "to ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted "of GOD," who placed me in ſuch circumſtances, or formed me of ſuch a conſtitution; for as certain it is, that GOD himſelf cannot be tempted to evil, ſo neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own unbridled luſt, and enticed, "by the wilful corruption of his own "heart."

But to what ſource ſhall we then attribute this mighty lake of filthineſs, which has, at length, burſt through the mounds of human decency; and in which ſo many

of

SERM. V.

of all ranks, orders, and ages are not aſhamed to wallow and be defiled? "Wherewithal (ſays the Pſalmiſt in a "ſolemn appeal to GOD) ſhall a young "man cleanſe his ways?" The anſwer is, "*Even by ruling himſelf after thy Word.*" Ye parents! who with trembling ſolicitude watch over the yet innocent object of your deareſt hopes; remember that he whoſe Wiſdom is infinite, points out no *other* ſecurity for virtue. But when we reflect, that an early tincture of Religion, or knowledge of the Word of GOD, and of the neceſſary ſuccours of his Grace, nay of the neceſſity of reſorting to his public worſhip, have been ſo long, and ſo generally neglected, as no eſſential part of a polite education, eſpecially among the great vulgar; and that cuſtom and connivance have, in ſome meaſure, leſſened the infamy of unbridled luſt, and reconciled men to its temporal conſequences; we cannot be ſurpriſed, that ſo few among us hardly

SERM. V.

exert a ſucceſsful effort to "poſſeſs their "veſſels in ſanctification and honour."

To caſt in an humble mite towards the reformation of my declining country, I ſhall take occaſion, from the words of my text, to remind you,

In the firſt place, that whatever ſentiments a corrupt and abandoned age may be pleaſed to indulge—*unchaſtity*, in man or woman, is, by the eternal conſtitution of things, a crime of the firſt magnitude, contrary to plain reaſon and natural Religion:—Joſeph emphatically calls it, a great wickedneſs. And

Secondly, that it is *a ſin againſt* GOD, our own ſouls and bodies, and all thoſe awful notices of his Will and our Duty; which he has, at the ſeveral periods of the world, thought fit to reveal.

Now that there has been throughout all ages, in every heart, whoſe moral ſenſe

was not obliterated by habitual wickedneſs, a *conviction* of the natural turpitude of this crime; may be proved from the national *puniſhments*, by general conſent, inflicted on the perpetrators of it. SERM. V.

Among the *Egyptians*, and other nations of the remoteſt antiquity, the adulterer, of whatever rank, was ſentenced to public diſgrace, and the adultereſs rendered an object of *perpetual infamy*, by having her perſon diſfigured by the common executioner; and in ſome inſtances, ſhe was condemned to be burnt alive, and her aſhes ſcattered by the winds; as if they thought even the remains of ſuch a monſter would pollute the very earth they trod on.

The *Athenians* entirely abandoned the criminal to the rage of her injured huſband, and inveſted him with authority of putting her to death, with his own hands, or by thoſe of the meaneſt of his ſlaves.

Such, likewiſe, was originally the puniſhment among the *Romans*; and by the law of the twelve tables, the adulterer might,

SERM. V.

might, with impunity, be put to *death* by the party he had diſhonoured. And when, afterwards, the *Julian law* changed this for perpetual baniſhment, the penalty was extended to thoſe alſo, who by deliberate fraud and perjury, ſeduced *unmarried* perſons from the paths of innocence and virtue. Nay, ſo ſtrongly engraved on their hearts was their abhorrence of ſuch practices; that one of their Emperors put the law in force, with the moſt impartial ſeverity, againſt his own child; and ordered her to be tranſported to a deſolate iſland, where ſhe was ſuffered to languiſh in deſpair to the hour of her death. As if in a mere ſtate of Nature, the duties of a *parent* were not more evident than the turpitude of theſe crimes; which we, who have every moral obligation illuſtrated, as it were, by a meridian ſunbeam —which we *Chriſtians* affect to excuſe as inſeparable from humanity. The time would fail me, ſhould I collect from the hiſtory of other nations, even before they

had emerged from a ſtate of barbarity, their unanimous ſuffrages againſt us. And if univerſal conſent be the voice of Nature, then does *Nature* herſelf proclaim, in alarming terms, which even the abandoned ſenſualiſt may hear, that a life of unchaſtity is the life of a brute beaſt, that hath no underſtanding—utterly unworthy of a rational being, immutably and eternally inexcuſable, unmanly, baſe, contemptible, and infamous. That it impairs the faculties of the mind, diſſolves by degrees the obligation of every virtue, and indiſpoſes to all the offices and duties of life, is another natural proteſt againſt it, level to every capacity. SERM. V.

If we turn our eyes to the moſt ancient and authentic hiſtory in the world, we ſhall find all this confirmed to us, by ſuch plain and irreſiſtible evidence, as all the ſubtilty of men and devils ſhall never be able to evade. We ſee, as it were, the waters of Heaven and Hell burſting from their natural ſtations, and combined in one mighty

SERM. V.

mighty torrent, to waſh away the whole race of mankind, eight perſons only excepted, from the face of the earth; as an awful and perpetual memento to all ſucceeding generations, of the baſeneſs of promiſcuous incontinency. For though unexpiated *murther*, and many other heinous enormities had defiled the world; yet we find this reaſon chiefly aſſigned for the aſtoniſhing viſitation; that *all fleſh had corrupted his way*, by abandoning itſelf to unreſtrained and habitual luſt. So that the unſpeakable turpitude of the ſin, may be eaſily inferred from the dreadful ſeverity of the puniſhment.

And afterwards, yet long before the *Moſaic* inſtitution was received, we find this idea ſo deeply impreſſed on the minds of men, that a whole city was put to the ſword, at once, for the violation of *Dinah*; becauſe they ſuffered the raviſher to eſcape with impunity. And when *Jacob* remonſtrated with his ſons for the deep revenge they had taken, they juſtified themſelves

themſelves, by this indignant expoſtu- SERM. V.
lation: "*Should he deal with our ſiſter, as* "*with an harlot?*" In the chapter preceding my text, we read, "when it was "told *Judah*, ſaying, *Tamar*, thy daughter "in law, is with child by whoredom; he "ſaid bring her forth, and let her be "burnt." Theſe you muſt admit, are caſes abundantly ſufficient to evince what was propoſed as our firſt topic of diſcourſe; —that *fornication*, and therefore, much more *adultery*, is by the eternal conſtitution of things, a crime of the firſt magnitude, contrary to plain reaſon, and natural Religion—"A GREAT WICKEDNESS."

Forgive me, if I remind you in the ſecond place, that it is a heinous *ſin*, againſt GOD, and our own precious, immortal ſouls—a formal violation and horrible contempt of all thoſe awful notices of his Will and our duty, which he hath, at the ſeveral periods of the world, thought fit to reveal.

And

SERM. V.

And in that ſolemn republication of the moral law, when Heaven and Earth atteſted the immediate preſence of the Lord GOD Omnipotent, THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY! was with the voice of an Arch-Angel, and the trump of GOD, proclaimed to the trembling world.—After ſuch a warning from that Being, of whoſe eſſential and neceſſary attributes perfect and unerring Juſtice is one; it is impoſſible to diſpute the equity of that law, which ordained, that "*the man who* "*committeth adultery with his neighbour's* "*wife; both the adulterer and adultereſs* "*ſhall be put to death.*" And that the ſin might never eſcape for want of *evidence*; there was a *miracle* always at hand to diſcover it. Upon reaſonable ſuſpicion, ſhe was compelled to drink the *bitter waters of jealouſy* (as the Scriptures call it) when, if guilty, ſhe immediately rotted in the ſight of the congregation, and her body ſwelled to that degree, that ſhe became as odious and corrupt in her perſon as in her mind.

If

SERM. V.

If we proceed to the *Goſpel*, we ſee all the terrors of Omnipotence drawn out in array againſt it. GOD indeed is pleaſed to remit the temporal penalty, to give room for *repentance*—that our inceſſant tears, may waſh away the horrible impurity of our ſouls. But if the ſenſe of the ſin be too weak to eject the ſeven devils of uncleanneſs, and we ſhould be ſummoned to our accompt in a ſtate of impenitence, every ray of hope is extinguiſhed. Infinite Mercy itſelf cannot ſave us; we are utterly and irrevocably ruined and undone to all eternity. "Let no man deceive you with "vain words"—think not to plead the ſcoff of infidels, or the example of the great and mighty—"for theſe things' ſake "the *wrath* of GOD"—his Apoſtle ſolemnly aſſures us; the extreme malediction of an Almighty Avenger—"cometh on "the daring children of diſobedience." Aſk even the Deiſt himſelf, whether he thinks any puniſhment too ſevere for that monſter of wickedneſs, who has contrived

to

SERM. V.

to ſet her conſcience and her honour at defiance, ruſhed through the native bounds of modeſty and ſhame, diſgraced her ſex, and degenerated to abſolute brutiſhneſs? who has repeatedly broken the covenant of her GOD, both in baptiſm and marriage, and ſtands perjured upon the public records? The adulterous iſſue, which ſhe incorporates with the lawful children, is a thief for life, and the effects of her perfidy may be heaping up ſorrow to her ſoul, many years after her loathſome body has been rotting in the grave.

Thus likewiſe the hope of the fornicatrix ſhall periſh. Think of thoſe remarkable words in the law, where the harlot, and an unclean *beaſt* are put upon an equal footing: "Thou ſhalt not bring "the hire of a *whore*, nor the price of a *dog*, "into the houſe of the Lord thy GOD; "for even *both theſe* are an abomination "unto him." *Abomination!* a word of mighty energy and meaning—ſomething which

which GOD deteſts with the moſt ſingular and invincible averſion. SERM. V.

Neither may the *man* boaſt any exemption from this character and emphatical infamy; whatever may be the opinion of a deluding and deluded world. For the Spirit of GOD has aſſured us, after bleſſing thoſe, who by obeying his Commandments have a right to the Tree of Life, and enter in through the gates of the city to eternal happineſs and glory—that without—for ever excluded—"are dogs, and whore-"mongers, and murderers." You will find this verſe in the twenty-ſecond chapter of the Revelations.

But yet, may not the ordinary excuſes drawn from the thoughtleſſneſs of youth; the weakneſs of our nature; the ſtrength of temptation; the prevalence of paſſion; and the commonneſs of the vice, ſtand us in ſome ſtead in the great day of accompt? "*Woe* be unto me, if I do not "preach the *Goſpel*." I ſhould handle "the Word of GOD *deceitfully*," to ſuffer

SERM. V. you, but for a ſingle moment, to indulge the fatal deluſion. No; without hearty repentance, through your injured Redeemer, JESUS CHRIST, offered up on the bended knees of your ſouls and bodies, and total abſtinence for the future; there is—there can be—no poſſible hope of reconciliation and forgiveneſs. Becauſe the Grace of GOD, which is ſufficient for every one of us, is always within the reach of one hearty, ſincere prayer. And bodily mortification, abſtinence, faſting, and vigilance, which are obvious, natural remedies, were never out of our own power. "Be not deceived (ſays the Apoſtle, alluding to the infatuating power of this ſin) "neither fornicators, nor "adulterers, ſhall inherit the Kingdom of "GOD."—"The works of the fleſh are "*manifeſt*,"—ſo that there is no plea for ignorance—"which are theſe, adultery, "fornication, uncleanneſs; of the which "(ſays he) I tell you again, as I have told "you in times paſt; that they who do

SERM. V.

"such things shall not inherit the Kingdom "of God." Once more; "Fornication "and uncleanness, let it not be once "named among you. For ye *know* that "no whoremonger hath any inheritance in "the Kingdom of CHRIST and of GOD." So likewise, St. John; "He that *over-* "*comes*"—the temptations of the world— "shall inherit all things, and I will be his "GOD, and he shall be my son; but the "unbelieving, murderers, and whore- "mongers, shall have their part in the "lake that burneth with fire and brim- "stone."

"Come now, let us reason together," my brethren! are these, or are they not, the immutable declarations and decrees of our GOD? They are. And Heaven and Earth shall pass away, before one jot, or one tittle of these laws shall be changed. "And though we," through fear of offending the licentious humours of men, or your own deceitful hearts; or the opinions of a corrupt world; "or an

SERM. V.

"Angel from Heaven, preach any *other* "Goſpel unto you, let him be accurſed." To this, we have, every one, bound our immortal ſouls, by that ſolemn vow, promiſe, and profeſſion, made at our baptiſm; over and above the univerſal obligations of natural Religion, and our own reaſon.

And ſhall we now venture to inſtitute a compariſon between theſe texts and our daily practices—to try our conduct by the rule of GOD's word? Alas! it would amount to a publication of our national infamy. A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land. Thoſe whom GOD hath joined together in holy matrimony, are now, by *man* continually put aſunder, for repeated adulteries.

The whoremonger is permitted, at the preſent day, almoſt without cenſure to hang out a flag of defiance againſt all law human and divine; and the concubine is notoriouſly kept, and openly reſorted to, in the face of the ſun, by the married as

well as the unmarried. Is it not a *common* occurrence, to meet both the old and the young going after her, without fear or ſhame, as an ox to the ſlaughter, or a fool to the correction of the ſtocks; inſenſible, unapprehenſive, unalarmed, till a dart of diſeaſe, poverty, or deſpair, ſtrike through his liver? Though her houſe be *univerſally known* to be the way to Hell, going down to the chambers of death. SERM. V.

Yes! this is the great crying ſin of our country—it calls day and night to Heaven, and muſt without ſpeedy reformation draw down ſwift, inevitable vengeance on our devoted heads. Is not *proviſion* for the fleſh publickly made, to enable you with more convenience to fulfil the luſts thereof? What other conſtruction will the enemy of our religion put upon thoſe *maſked aſſemblies*, which, of late, are grown ſo frequent among us? Will not our ſecret hiſtories juſtify his application of *Job*'s complaint? "The *adulterer diſguiſeth his face*, and waiteth for the twilight,

SERM. V.

"ſaying, no eye ſhall ſee me." In this artificial darkneſs, they dig through the virtue and honour of thoſe, whom they had marked for themſelves in the day-time.

Hence the peace of families is irrecoverably deſtroyed; hence the faithful huſband is irreparably injured, diſhonoured; hence the grey hairs of the venerable parent are brought down with ſorrow to the grave, for the ruin of a lovely and once innocent child; hence the implacable fury of private vengeance is let looſe among us in duels, defiling the land with premeditated murthers; hence many immortal ſouls, for whoſe Salvation the immaculate Lamb of GOD was content to pour forth his precious Blood, are ſealed up unto the day of wrath; and the meaſure of our national iniquities is inſenſibly accumulating to Heaven.

But I forbear; for the tongue and breath of man ſhall ſooner fail, than one half of the turpitude and guilt, and fatal conſe-

quences

quences of this ſin both here and hereafter, can be adequately repreſented. SERM. V.

While yet the deſtroying Angel withholdeth his hand;—while yet mercy rejoiceth againſt judgement;—ere we alſo feel the arrows of the Almighty piercing us, and the poiſon thereof drinking up our ſpirits:—Oh! let man and beaſt be clothed with ſackcloth, and cry mightily unto the Lord our GOD, to indulge us with time for general repentance and reformation. And let every ſoul among us earneſtly employ it to caſt away his abomination, and cleanſe himſelf from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit; remembering that marriage is honourable among men, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers GOD will inflexibly condemn—GOD will eternally puniſh.

May the habitual conviction of this fearful truth incline us all, frequently and fervently to beſeech him, to give his people grace to withſtand the temptations of the world, the fleſh, and the Devil; and with

SERM. V. *pure* hearts and minds, to follow his commandments, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord!

To whom, with the Father, &c.

SERMON VI.

THE PRESENT AND FUTURE CONDITION OF THE BODY.

SERMON VI.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

1 Cor. xv. 53.

SERM. VI.

So wonderfully extensive is that variety of argument supplied by Christian revelation, that there is not, perhaps, one single passion or propensity in mankind—unless absolutely diabolical and absurd—which, under the influence of some one or other, is not capable of being rendered a powerful motive to virtue and true religion. It has been lamented by the moralists of every age and denomination, that it was too evident, from the conduct of the generality of their fellow-creatures, that

SERM. VI.

that the well-being of their *bodies* only was the ſole great object of univerſal ſolicitude.

Now inſtead of exaggerated, undiſtinguiſhing declamation againſt this paſſion—which, while men continue what they are, will be for ever ineffectual—we are ſupplied with a ſet of doctrines, from that admirable and ſublime chapter from whence I have choſen my text, by the proper application of which, we may convince the corporealiſt, or lover of his body, that even he, unleſs inconſiſtent even to ſtupidity and madneſs, is under the higheſt poſſible obligations to practiſe the great duties of Chriſtianity.

The truth of this aſſertion will ſatisfactorily appear, if we take occaſion, from the words of the text, to compare the *preſent* ſtate and condition of our bodies with that, which according to infallible revelation, ſhall be their lot after the general reſurrection.

Let this therefore be the buſineſs of our preſent meditations; to which I ſhall only beg

beg leave to add a few practical improvements ſuggeſted by the intereſting diſquiſition. SERM. VI.

The human body though externally impreſſed with all the lineaments of ſtrength, grace, and harmony, is yet within ſo fearfully and wonderfully made, that its continuance in life and motion is little leſs than an uninterrupted ſucceſſion of miracles—compoſed of ſuch jarring and diſagreeing principles as cannot long, in the nature of things, maintain a vital amity and union. The hoſtile qualities can never be reduced to an equal balance of power—but the perpetual conflict of life is itſelf the parent of death. We are not only *born* with the ſeeds of corruption, and haſten towards our end by an unavoidable tendency, but innumerable outward cauſes are ever ready to anticipate the period of nature, and break ſhort thoſe maſterſprings of life, which would of themſelves reſign their functions in a very inconſiderable ſpace of time. Diſeaſe and pain, ſickneſs

SERM. VI.

and sorrow, dissolution and death, are the only certain inheritance here below, which the flesh is heir to.

But if we turn our eyes towards the condition of our bodies after the *resurrection*, as plainly exhibited by the unerring word of truth, how animating a reverse of all this, do we there discover! Though they are *sown in corruption*, the Apostle solemnly assures us, *they shall be raised in incorruption*. "This *mortal* (says he) shall "put on *immortality*:" be restored to us though a material, yet an immortal substance; refined from all corruptible alloy, purged from every *principle* of corruption and frailty; not supported by an extraordinary power of GOD, contrary to the nature of things, but having immortality interwoven into its very texture and constitution; necessarily *incapable* of decay within, and impregnable against violence from without.

It is no small inconvenience in our present state, that our bodies are for some years

years almoſt entirely uſeleſs;—unfit for the ſoul to act in; nay incapable even of their own preſervation. No ſooner are we born than our mouths are filled with lamentation, and our inarticulate prayers tenderly implore the pity and aſſiſtance of thoſe about us. Our bodies are firſt the continual care of others, and afterwards of ourſelves. We are inceſſantly guarding them from dangers without, and attentive to what paſſes within, to keep the wheels of life in their due and regular movement—we muſt watch their deſires and wants, to recreate them with pleaſure and ſupport them with neceſſaries. Our ſenſual appetites are perpetually ſoliciting on one ſide, and all our reaſon muſt be employed to regulate them on the other. If they are entirely neglected, our bodies pine and languiſh; if gratified to the utmoſt, they then nauſeate and are uneaſy; and if indulged to an exact *mediocrity*, they preſently droop again, and demand new refreſh-

SERM. VI.

ment

SERM. VI.

ment to enable them to carry on the drudgery of life.

But at the reſurrection all theſe inconveniencies ſhall be unknown. We ſhall *ſubſiſt* upon an internal principle of immortality, independent of every extrinſic means by which they are ſuſtained here below. The paſſions, thoſe elements of life, ſhall then be reduced to an harmonious ſubſerviency to each other—raiſing no tempeſt, no law in our members, warring againſt the law of our minds; but the ſoul ſhall abſolutely command, and the body readily obey, being now ſpiritualized into a cloſer, an indiſſoluble alliance, and entirely devoted to its ſervice. Scarce ſhall the one conceive a wiſh but the other ſhall immediately execute it; endowed with ſwiftneſs and ſtrength indefectible, which will be at once the happineſs and the glory of both.

Now ſo tender and weak is our infant frame, that we impotently *crawl*, as it were,

were, over the first stage of life. And when it arrives at its firmest vigour, it is daily impaired by labour and trouble; the strong man hideth himself in his bed, as in the grave; and when he awaketh to a renewal of his faculties, every morning is a resurrection. Watchfulness and pain presently reduce him to a state of listless inactivity; the spirits insensibly wasting, till life is exhausted to the extremest dregs. Every motion of our pulse then beats but a surrender to death, and the whole body seems (though reluctantly) to acknowledge her kindred; "saying to corruption, thou "art my father, and to the worm, thou "art my sister and my mother." But though thus *sown in weakness*, the Apostle assures us, it *shall be raised in power*; with such vivacity and strength, such immortal youth and vigour, as to demand neither rest or refreshment; undecayed amidst the lapse of ages, and rather improved, than impaired by the discipline of unremitted action.

SERM. VI.

SERM. VI.

But if the term of the body's exiſtence upon earth be protracted to any conſiderable duration, the bare reflection on its natural infirmities at that time muſt extort from us the wiſe man's exclamation, "Vanity of vanities, ſaith the preacher; "all is vanity!" The affecting catalogue is before me, delivered by the ſame author under the veil of an *allegory*, ſo exquiſitely beautiful, as even to atone for the horror of its ſubject:—"Remember now thy "Creator (ſays he) in the days of thy "*youth*, while the *evil* days come not, nor "the years draw nigh, when thou ſhalt "ſay, I have no pleaſure in them. While "the ſun, or the light, or the moon, or "the ſtars be not darkened, nor the clouds "return after the rain;"—that is, when the ſight begins to fail, and continual defluxions of rheum deform the face.—"In "the day (he proceeds) when the keepers "of the houſe—the arms—ſhall tremble, "and the ſtrong men ſhall bow themſelves" —the legs are unequal to their office—

"and

SERM. VI.

"and the grinders ceaſe, becauſe they are "few, and thoſe that look out of the "windows"—the pupils of the eyes—"be "darkened; and the doors ſhall be ſhut "from abroad"—to exclude that ſociety which can now be no longer enjoyed, becauſe—"the ſound of the grinding is low" —or the ſpeech faileth—"and he ſhall "riſe up at the voice of the bird"—his ſleep ſhall be interrupted by the earlieſt crowing of the cock—"and all the "daughters of muſick ſhall be brought "low"—even the voice of harmony itſelf ſhall ceaſe to delight.

"Behold (ſays Barzillai) I am this day "fourſcore years old; and can *I* diſcern "between good and evil? Can thy ſervant "taſte what I eat, or what I drink? Can "I hear any more the voice of ſinging "men or ſinging women?"

"Alſo they ſhall be afraid (the "preacher proceeds) of that which is "nigh, and fears ſhall be in the way"—every obſtacle, every difficulty ſhall diſ-

SERM. VI.

courage—"and the almond-tree," or the hair whiter than its bloſſoms—"ſhall flou-"riſh, and the graſs-hopper—or the "ſlighteſt inconvenience—ſhall be a "burthen, and deſire ſhall fail: becauſe "man goeth to his long home, and the "mourners" are as it were, already choſen to follow him, "in the ſtreets. The "ſilver cord ſhall be looſed"—that is, the ſpinal marrow, the ſtrength of the back ſhall be relaxed—"the golden bowl "broken," the head become as uſeleſs as a broken veſſel, "or the pitcher broken at "the fountain, or the wheel broken at the "ciſtern," and the heart that fountain of life, totally forget its functions. "Then "ſhall the duſt return to the earth as it "was, and the ſpirit ſhall return unto "GOD who gave it."

Nay, when deprived of life, the body even of the young and beautiful ſhall become a loathſome carcaſe; the pleaſing looks and air be ſet into ghaſtlineſs and horror; and the graceful features die away

away into paleneſs and diſtortion, trying the affection of its deareſt friends to give the farewell look, and attend thoſe laſt offices which cuſtom and decency require. From this abject and low condition it ſhall be raiſed a *glorious body*, dazzling with native luſtre, reſplendent as the brighteſt luminaries of Heaven. "The "righteous (ſays our Divine Inſtructor) "ſhall ſhine forth as the *ſun* in the King- "dom of their Father:"—that is, the body being raiſed pure and ſpiritual, refined from every particle of corruption, into an ethereal and lucid ſubſtance, like a lamp, ſhall tranſmit the emanations of an immortal ſoul, and dart a beam of glory through every pore. SERM. VI.

"Giving thanks (ſays the Apoſtle) "unto the Father, who hath made us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance "of the Saints in light," that is, who are themſelves embodied in light; "having "delivered us from the power of *darkneſs* "and deformity, and tranſlated us into the

SERM. VI.

"kingdom," and we may add, transformed us into the likeneſs "of his dear Son; "who is the image of the inviſible GOD."

But though the bodies of all good men in general ſhall be thus raiſed up with unſpeakable advantages and improvements, irradiated with celeſtial glories, yet will the beauty of every one in particular be different. As "there is one glory of the ſun, "another glory of the moon, and another "glory of the ſtars; and one ſtar differeth "from another ſtar in glory; ſo alſo ſhall "be the reſurrection of the dead." When each ſhall be inveſted with unequal luſtre, ſuitable to the different orbs of happineſs they are intended to ſhine in hereafter, and both proportioned to the different degrees of holineſs they ſhall have attained to here.

As for the *ungodly*, it is not ſo with them; they too ſhall be raiſed indeed incorruptible and immortal, but to everlaſting ſhame and contempt, with every circumſtance of diſhonour, deformity, and diſgrace,

diſgrace; odious as that *vice*, under whoſe banners they voluntarily enliſted themſelves: which will now doom them to the moſt exquiſite ſenſations of pain, without diſſolution; and to the agonizing tortures of the ſecond death, without the poſſibility of dying. And now what an irreſiſtible motive is this to virtue and religion for thoſe who have only the care of their bodies at heart! Do they ſincerely wiſh for health untaintable, infallible ſtrength, angelic ſwiftneſs, and never-fading beauty; are even theſe really the objects of their ambition? let them "ſeek "the Kingdom of GOD and his righteouſ-"neſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added "unto them." They ſhall be gratified beyond their moſt unbounded wiſh;—beyond all that they can ſpeak, or conceive. Yes! do we but now endeavour to faſhion our life and converſation after that of the great Captain of our Salvation; he himſelf has engaged that our *bodies*, however vile, afflicted, corruptible, or

SERM. VI. infirm, ſhall hereafter be faſhioned like unto his glorious body, as it now ſitteth at the right hand of GOD. Behold then in fact, what the philoſophers but vainly dreamed of, that virtue and beauty are indeed one and the ſame thing. And muſt it not be a moſt perſuaſive ſummons to the practice of religious duties, to cry out in the language of the prophet; "Awake, awake, "put on thy ſtrength, O Zion! put on "thy beauty, O daughter of Jeruſalem!"

And thus, taking the infallible word of GOD for my direction, have I endeavoured to inveſtigate that great and myſterious change which our bodies ſhall undergo at the reſurrection; and to ſtate the difference between their preſent and future condition.

But ſuppoſing we had never received any expreſs revelation of this doctrine; "Yet why ſhould it be thought a thing "incredible with you that GOD ſhould "raiſe the dead? He who originally "made this world and all things in it out

SERM. VI.

"of nothing, it is evident muſt be able to "reſtore that which is dead to life again;" that is, make it out of ſomething already in exiſtence. There is a ſaying of one of the Jewiſh Rabbies that carries with it all the force of demonſtration on this ſubject: "He who made that which was *not*, to be "(ſays the excellent reaſoner) can cer-"tainly make that which once *was*, to be "again. At the bare mention of infinite "wiſdom and power, every poſſible ob-"jection againſt this great article of our "faith, vaniſhes into nothing. And is it "not highly *reaſonable* that the ſame body "which co-operated with the ſoul in virtue "or vice here upon earth—the ſame hands "which were lifted up in prayer—the "ſame tongue which praiſed and glorified "GOD—the ſame feet which went about "doing good—ſhould at laſt be re-united "to the ſoul, and admitted to a parti-"cipation of that eternal reward which "they were (through the merits of "CHRIST) inſtrumental in obtaining."

And

SERM. VI.

And ſince this great doctrine is evidently neither impoſſible or unreaſonable, but has been inconteſtibly proved to us by moſt certain warranty of Scripture; nay, even by a plain, authenticated matter of fact, the *Reſurrection* of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, who is become "the FIRST FRUITS of them that ſlept;" why ſhould we be ſorry, "as men *without* "hope, for them that ſtill ſleep in the "Lord?" Suppoſe the bodies of thoſe we honour and eſteem, are delivered over to the rage of winds, or fires, ſunk to the bottom of the great deep, or melted into unconſcious earth; yet in his book are all their members written, which he will one day certainly reſtore to them again, and them to our longing, raptured boſoms. Oh! what unſpeakable delight to embrace the long-loſt children of our love—the honoured parent—the faithful, amiable friend—after a ſeparation of ages, and receive them blooming with immortal youth, without one painful apprehenſion

of

of ever reſigning them again. Then ſhall be brought to paſs—we ſhall *feel* the completion of that ſaying which is written: "Death is ſwallowed up in Victory!"—With what extacy ſhall each of us repeat that triumphant ejaculation of the Apoſtle: "O, Death! where is thy ſting? O, "Grave where is thy victory? Thanks "be to GOD which giveth us the victory, "through our Lord JESUS CHRIST!" SERM. VI.

Here then we reſt; "We know (we "are certain) that our Redeemer liveth, "and that he ſhall ſtand at the laſt day "upon the earth; and though after our "ſkin, worms deſtroy theſe bodies, yet in "our fleſh we ſhall ſee GOD, whom we "ſhall ſee for ourſelves, and our own eyes "ſhall behold, and not another." "This is the Father's Will who hath "ſent me, that of all which he hath "given me (ſays that adorable Saviour) I "ſhould loſe nothing, but ſhould raiſe it "up again at the laſt day." Once more; "This is the Will of him that ſent me, "that

SERM. VI.

"that every one who ſeeth the Son, and "believeth on him, may have everlaſting "life; and I will raiſe him up at the laſt "day." And again, in the ſame chapter, "Whoſo eateth my fleſh and drinketh my "blood hath eternal life (is already in "poſſeſſion of it) and I will raiſe him up "at the laſt day. For my fleſh is meat "indeed, and my blood is drink indeed: "and he that eateth of this bread ſhall "live for ever."

O, my brethren! Let this reiterated, ſolemn aſſurance from him who is truth itſelf, engage us to bear thoſe afflictions, ſickneſſes, and bodily pains, with which we are at preſent exerciſed, with patience and reſignation. Let us hold out a little longer, for the time of our *redemption* draweth near, when all tears ſhall be wiped from our eyes, and there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow nor crying. We are now but ſtrangers and pilgrims travelling towards the Heavenly Jeruſalem, and muſt expect many difficulties and inconveniencies

SERM. VI.

conveniencies in the profecution of our journey; but when we arrive at the place of our reſt, we ſhall be abundantly recompenced for all; receiving our perfect conſummation and bliſs both in body and ſoul in eternal and everlaſting glory.

And ſhall we voluntarily forfeit this unſpeakable happineſs by our murmuring and impatience? Or ſhall we permit our fears of dying to *fruſtrate* all that our dear Redeemer hath done and ſuffered for us; traiterouſly *reſtoring* thoſe *terrors* to Death, of which he had ſo triumphantly deſpoiled him! No, my brethren; we know indeed that it ſeparates us from our bodies for a ſeaſon; but that, only that we may receive them far more pure and glorious. We muſt therefore either give up all our pretenſions to Chriſtianity, or elſe learn with more courage to expect our own diſſolution, and with greater patience to bear that of our friends and relations.

What fears can *they* poſſibly have for themſelves or others when they go down to

SERM. VI.

the chambers of the grave, and are ſown in corruption, who are rationally perſuaded they ſhall be raiſed in incorruption, and ſpring up unto eternal life? Does the huſbandman fear to commit the good ſeed to the ground, becauſe for a while it appeareth to rot into common earth; when he believes it ſhall nevertheleſs aſſuredly ſpring up in its ſeaſon, and bring forth fruit, ſome an hundred fold, ſome ſixty, and ſome thirty? No; *that* is *revived* by dying, and *grows* by putrefaction. It is ſown bare grain; it riſes up inveſted and adorned with a beautiful cloathing. And if GOD ſo clothe the graſs of the field, which to-day *is*, and to-morrow is caſt into the oven, ſhall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Let us only ſincerely endeavour to purify ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh, as well as ſpirit, to glorify GOD in our *body* alſo; yielding our members ſervants to righteouſneſs, unto holineſs; and then although the ſtage of univerſal nature ſhall

be

be hung round with enſigns of mourning and ſorrow;—"the ſun be darkened, and "the moon withdraw her light;"—we may ſupport ourſelves under every poſſible calamity and danger by inferring the certainty of a glorious reſurrection even from GOD's *Juſtice*; or, which is infinitely more ſatisfactory, from his infallible *veracity*. For he is faithful who promiſed that our bodies ſhall not "ſleep the ſleep "of eternal death, but we ſhall all be "*changed*, in a moment, in the twinkling "of an eye at the laſt trump (for the "trumpet ſhall ſound, and the dead ſhall "be raiſed, and we, who remain alive, "ſhall be changed) and this corruptible "ſhall put on incorruption, and this "mortal ſhall put on immortality."

"Therefore my beloved brethren"—ſo permit me to addreſs you in the pathetic language of the Apoſtle—"be ye ſtedfaſt, "in the faith;" unmoveably perſevering in doing and ſuffering the Divine Will, "always abounding in the Work of the "Lord;"

SERM. VI.

"Lord;" ever ready to exert your utmoſt induſtry and diligence in your Chriſtian calling. "Foraſmuch as you *know*," you have all the certainty poſſible in the nature of the thing—"that your labour is not in "vain in the Lord."

Now to GOD *the Father, &c.*

SERMON

SERMON VII.

SLANDER REPROVED,

SERMON VII.

SERMON VII.

If any man among you ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart;—this man's religion is vain.

James i. 26.

SERM. VII.

THERE is hardly any paſſion or propenſity, in our degraded nature, which ſo thoroughly blots out the image of GOD in the ſoul of man, and ſhows us in ſuch abject, odious, and deteſtable colours, as that by which we are induced to repine at the happineſs, and rejoice at the afflictions of our fellow-creatures. "Envy (ſays Solomon) is rottenneſs to "the bones:" and the loathſome carcaſe is always tenanted by a mind, of which a

SERM. VII.

total *perverſion* of faculties is but the ſlighteſt ſymptom of corruption. "To "rejoice with thoſe that rejoice, and to "weep with thoſe that weep," is the natural effect of that *ſocial* principle, on which all the charities of life depend. It is no wonder, therefore, that Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apoſtles—every ſacred and every civil moraliſt—ſhould be found to unite all their forces to expoſe and explode this unnatural and flagitious malignity, and that, which is its inſeparable attendant —calumny or evil-ſpeaking. Even a poor Heathen could tell us that a ſlanderer differs from a malefactor in this only; that the one has found his opportunity, and the other was waiting for it. "Envy (ſays "another) is abſolutely blind, knowing "nothing but to hate and vilify merit: "that we ſhould therefore, above all things "be cautious, that our converſation does "not betray our own diſregard to morality "and honour; which (ſays he) is always "the caſe, when we attack the character

"of the abſent: for an evil tongue is an "infallible ſign of an evil heart." Nay one of their Satiriſts has laid it down as a rule, that wilfully to miſrepreſent the conduct of another man, or even ſuffer it to be done in our hearing—to endeavour to recommend ourſelves to company, by our dexterity in introducing the tale of detraction, is a demonſtration that our ſouls are blackened with *envy*, and a ſignal to all good men to avoid our ſociety. SERM. VII.

And yet notwithſtanding theſe unanimous and univerſal teſtimonies againſt it, it is our misfortune to fall on times, when to the diſgrace of our national character, and of the pureſt ſyſtem of morality and religion that ever claimed the attention of the human ſoul;—when to ſpeak evil of evil-ſpeaking will be regarded as little leſs than an attempt to deprive modern converſation of the very circumſtance, which chiefly recommends it to thoſe, who ſtill inconſiſtently profeſs and call themſelves Chriſtians.

SERM. VII.

It is indeed a melancholy reflection, that there are thouſands at the preſent day, who depend upon the faſhionable reliſh for detraction, calumny, and perſonal ridicule, not only for their daily bread, but for all that renders them acceptable to thoſe with whom they converſe.—Without this, "their ſalt hath loſt its "ſavour; and wherewith ſhall it be "ſeaſoned? It is from thenceforth, "good for nothing, but to be caſt out, and "trodden under-foot of men."

Hence the credit of the merchant and induſtrious tradeſman; the honour of the gentleman, and the reputation of many an innocent, friendleſs, and unprotected woman, are the continual ſport, or rather the unpitied victims, of that principle of envy, which we poſſeſs in common with the abandoned and apoſtate ſpirit, who is emphatically branded in Scripture with the title of accuſer, or *ſlanderer* of the brethren.

SERM. VII.

Is there any dignity ſo high; is there any diſtreſs ſo low; any character ſo ſacred; any magnanimity, prudence, wiſdom, benevolence, or beneficence; age, ſex, rank, or condition; ſo illuſtrious, or ſo obſcure, as not to afford a mark to thoſe, who are continually ſhooting out their arrows—even bitter words?

If there be any ſuch among us, to them it is the bounden, indiſpenſable duty of the Goſpel moraliſt to take up his parable, and ſay—"Why boaſteſt thou "thyſelf, thou tyrant! that thou canſt "do miſchief? Thy tongue imagineth "wickedneſs, and with lies thou cutteſt "like a ſharp razor. Thou haſt loved to "ſpeak all words that may do hurt!"

"To ſuch ungodly ones, ſaith the Lord, "Why takeſt thou my covenant in thy "mouth (daring to make pretence to any "religion whatſoever) whereas thou "hateſt to be reformed, and haſt caſt my "words (even all my holy command-"ments) behind thee? When thou

SERM. VII.

"ſaweſt the thief, and *murderer of reputa-*
"*tions*, thou conſentedſt unto him. Thou
"ſatteſt and ſpeakedſt againſt thy brother,
"yea, and haſt ſlandered thine own
"mother's ſon. But I will reprove thee,
"and ſet before thee the things that thou
"haſt done."

To be ſilent when ſuch vices are become epidemical, is to be a ſharer in their guilt; and not to diſcourage is to approve.

And the firſt obſervation I ſhall offer for the recovery of thoſe, who thus betray the corruption of their own hearts, and for the preſervation of ſuch, who have hitherto eſcaped the general contagion, and ordered their converſation aright, is this; —that although we ſhould be mean enough to find pleaſure in the *ſlander*; yet all mankind in their hearts, ſincerely deteſt and deſpiſe the *ſlanderer*.

When we hear the character of our abſent neighbour wantonly vilified and expoſed to ridicule, every perſon of common

ſenſe

ſenſe will naturally make this reflection: — it will be MY turn, as ſoon as I ſhall be in my neighbour's circumſtances;—that is, abſent, and without a defender. It is little more than animal inſtinct to fear the habitual and indiſcriminate deſtroyer of reputation, in the ſame proportion as we love our own: and any knowledge of the movements of the human heart, muſt convince us, that in ſuch caſes, ſhort and eaſy is the tranſition from fear to hatred. SERM. VII.

But we may here ſafely appeal even to the ſlanderer himſelf. When ſtrongly armed in the terrors of ſcandal, he can deter others from recrimination; his mind may perhaps be in peace; but when a ſtronger than he ſhall come upon him, and overcome him with the weapons of ridicule, taking from him all his armour, wherein he truſted, and ſo long triumphed; his general ſatire commonly ſettles into perſonal rancour, his warmth of fancy into the fever of revenge, and his wit and merriment into gnaſhing of teeth.

Now

SERM. VII.

Now ſuch with reſpect to himſelf muſt be the diſpoſition of every man who has ſuffered under the malignity of his tongue; or who, convinced of his habitual propenſity to ſlander, but *ſuſpects* he has, or apprehends he hereafter may. "An eye "for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," is but too often the juſtice of the world.

"He that beareth falſe witneſs againſt "his neighbour (ſaith Solomon) is a *maul*, "and a ſword, and a ſharp arrow;" bruiſing with the bluntest weapon, as fatally as he cutteth with the ſharpeſt, and wounding thoſe that are at a diſtance, as certainly as thoſe that are at hand. And it is the obſervation of the wiſe ſon of Sirach, that "a back-biting tongue hath caſt out vir-"tuous women, and deprived them of "their labours. Many (ſays he) have "fallen by the edge of the ſword, but not "ſo many as have fallen by the tongue; "and well is he that is defended from it, "and hath not paſſed through the venom "thereof."

But

SERM. VII.

But ſince every man muſt be convinced, that there cannot now be any defence againſt it; *every man* muſt therefore be the ſecret enemy of the ſubtile and complicated miſchief. Behold then an almoſt univerſal conſpiracy againſt you; only waiting till ſome ordinary misfortune, calamity, or diſappointment in life, holds out the ſignal of attack, to riſe like a giant refreſhed with wine, and repay you all the anguiſh they have ſuffered, or even *apprehended*, from your notorious propenſity to defamation. And is it any wonder that the reſt of mankind ſhould now diſcover an inclination to purchaſe their own ſecurity at your expence? How often have you miſrepreſented their principles and conduct, and wounded them in the apple of their eye? How often has that pearl of great price—more valued perhaps than fortune, health, or even life itſelf—been foully ſullied, and all its radiance extinguiſhed by that ſpirit of yours, which is like the troubled ſea, that cannot reſt,

SERM. VII.

whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt. Till now no one has been able to ſay, Thus far ſhalt thou go, and no farther; and here ſhall thy proud waves be ſtopped. But now is the time come to break the head of the dragon in the waters; to ſmite Leviathan in pieces, and give him in his turn to be ſport for the people. Retaliation is now on foot, and at the very moment, when thou art leaſt able to prepare for defence; oppreſſed perhaps with poverty, ſickneſs, and anguiſh of ſoul; an hoſt of foes are drawn out againſt thee, who without pity or remorſe may "laugh at thy calamity, "and mock when thy fear cometh."

The benevolent Redeemer of the world has ſolemnly cautioned us, and your own fatal experience will now bring home the alarming truth immediately to your own perſon;—"Judge not, that ye be not "judged; condemn not, that ye be not "condemned: for with what judgement ye "judge, ye ſhall be judged, and with what "meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to

"you

"you again. Yea, good meaſure, preſſed "down, and ſhaken together, and running "over, ſhall men (under the ſenſe of injuries) "give into your boſom." Conſidering therefore, how much we are all in each other's power, from the viciſſitude of ſublunary things, admirable is the advice of the Pſalmiſt on this ſubject: "What man is "he, that deſireth to live, and would fain "ſee good days? Keep thy *tongue* from "evil, and thy lips that they ſpeak no "guile; ſeek peace and enſue it. SERM. VII.

And if the reflection that the habitual ſlanderer is in a ſtate of warfare with all mankind—that the very calamities of life, to which we are all every moment liable, when they fall upon *him*, ſo far from exciting the ſympathizing pity of friendſhip, which is the richeſt cordial that Heaven has thrown into the cup of ſorrow—are on the contrary, a notice to his injured neighbours to begin rejoicing:—if, in one word, common ſenſe and worldly prudence, will not prevail on him to keep

his

SERM. VII.

his mouth as it were with a bridle, and ſet a watch over the door of his lips—a mere negative duty, as eaſy as ſilence, as neceſſary as honeſty, and as amiable as honour—there are but two or three motives more that can be ſuggeſted to ſnatch him from obduracy and perdition.

"The words of the tale-bearer or whiſperer (ſays Solomon) are wounds, and "they go down to the innermoſt parts of "the belly;" that is, the anguiſh inflicted by them corrodes and preys upon the very vitals—"his mouth is his own deſtruction, "and his lips are the ſnare of his ſoul." For thinkeſt thou, O man, who wantonly or maliciouſly judgeſt another, that thou thyſelf ſhalt eſcape the judgement of GOD? No; the deplorable corruption of modern manners, and the too general malignity of the human heart, may induce ſome of thy fellow-creatures to hear thee for a while with apparent complacency; but let it be for ever remembered, as

A ſecond

SERM. VII.

A ſecond reſtorative and preſervative, that as in the multitude of ſuch words, there wanteth not *ſin*, thou certainly and inevitably treaſureſt up unto thyſelf wrath, againſt the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of GOD.

It is an impious encroachment on the divine prerogatives; it is an audacious uſurpation of *his* power and authority. "We know him that hath ſaid judge-"ment belongeth unto me; I will recom-"penſe, ſaith the Lord:" and again, "The lord ſhall judge his people; I will "not give my glory to another."

Are you ignorant of all this? Or is your malice and flagitious preſumption an over-match for your knowledge? When a ſerious man hears ſuch an one—as he may, at the preſent day in almoſt every public and private company, arraigning and ſpeaking deciſively on the conduct, principles, and ſentiments of his fellow-creatures; holding them up to ridicule, contempt, and infamy, and ſentencing them,

by

SERM. VII. by a proceſs that admits of no appeal or arreſt of judgement, to ſomething worſe than even death itſelf; if he be not ſtruck dumb with horror, will he forbear to aſk, "What! has the Judge of all the earth "entruſted his own knowledge of the "ſecrets of the heart, without which the "merit or demerit of a moral agent can "never be juſtly aſcertained, with him?" Weak by nature, and wicked by habit, art thou commiſſioned to fill the tribunal of infinite Wiſdom and unerring Juſtice? If not, "who art thou, that judgeſt an-"other man's ſervant? To his own "maſter he ſtandeth or falleth, and not to "thee. There is but one man, to whom "the Lord hath given judgement either in "Heaven or Earth—the man CHRIST "JESUS, who for *this end*, both died and "roſe and revived, that he might be judge "both of the dead and of the living.— "Why then doſt THOU judge thy brother, "or why doſt thou ſet at nought thy "brother? Knowing both he and thou "muſt

"must ſtand together before the judge- SERM. VII.
"ment-ſeat of CHRIST." And when thou ſhalt appear pale and trembling at that bar—conſider a moment, for thy eternal ſalvation is at ſtake—Oh, conſider what apology thou ſhalt be able to offer for ſo audacious and horrible an encroachment on the moſt ſacred rights of the Lord and his anointed; what reparation for the injuries ſuſtained by thy neighbour.

For over and above the unſpeakable arrogance and preſumption of the practice, with reſpect to GOD, its evident *injuſtice*, with reſpect to man, will ſuggeſt

A third moſt alarming motive to immediate repentance. St. Paul has united theſe objects; "the divine wrath (ſays he) "is revealed from Heaven againſt all un- "godlineſs and unrighteouſneſs, or impiety "and injuſtice of men."

And is it well poſſible to conceive a more intolerable outrage to the plaineſt dictates

SERM. VII.

of *juſtice*, than for a man to aſſume the cenſor's office over his equals; not only without reaſon, permiſſion, or authority, but in expreſs violation of his own duty? and in the exerciſe of it, to neglect all thoſe indiſpenſable rules, on the obſervance of which the equity of every ſentence muſt depend;—To judge and decide without competent evidence; nay ſometimes without any proof at all, but his own ſuſpicions, and general malevolence;—To drag the very Kings and counſellors of the Earth to his tribunal;—not from any honeſt conviction that their conduct really deſerves cenſure; but merely becauſe he has liſted himſelf under the banners of a faction whoſe wicked, dirty work, his envy, avarice, or pride, have induced him to perform?

Under this ſpecies of infamous injuſtice may be claſſed almoſt all our periodical publications at the preſent day;—the authors of which are ſo far from being afraid to ſpeak evil of dignities, that their miſerable

SERM. VII.

miſerable invention is on an everlaſting rack to hold out ſomething plauſible to delude the ignorant people, and keep up their animoſities againſt thoſe who have the reins of government in their hands. Their very daily bread depends upon their daily lye; miſrepreſentation is their merit; the conduct of their rulers is then moſt ſubject to reproach, when, by the ſuffrage of reaſon and juſtice, they are moſt irreproachable, and the loudeſt complaints are always heard, when no real cauſe of complaint exiſts.

And is this a moment to be ſpreading diſcontent, and diffuſing ſuſpicions of our ſuperiors—fomenting ill-will againſt one another; when perhaps our very exiſtence as a free and Proteſtant people, depends on our mutual confidence and unanimity? Are we ſo blinded by malice as not to ſee that we are holding out an invitation to our blood-thirſty enemies, to avail themſelves of our unnatural, deſtructive diviſions? "A kingdom divided againſt itſelf is ſoon

SERM. VII.

"brought to deſolation." Our reciprocal revilings—the ſword of our own tongues has hewed them out a paſſage into the bowels of our native country; it is GOD's unmerited mercy alone if we are not utterly conſumed. Attempts have been made to render even our ſoldiers and ſailors diſaffected, and our very courts of juſtice have been proſtituted to the purpoſes of party. But to develop the political ſlander of the times would almoſt deſecrate the place from which I addreſs you.

Can there be a higher inſtance of *injuſtice* than theſe frequent and flagrant violations of that univerſal rule of not doing to others as we would not they ſhould do unto us? Would you ever be prevailed on to conſent thus to have your good or evil ſpoken of? Or when, through the infirmity of nature, you happen to be overtaken in a fault; in what light would you regard your neighbour, who, inſtead of caſting the veil of candour over it, ſhould run from houſe to houſe publiſhing and aggravating it, with all

all the misrepresentation of ridicule, all the rage of an inquisitor, and all the malice of a fiend? You would tell him, that if he would study to be quiet and mind his own business, he would neither have leisure or inclination to scrutinize into other people's:—that it is inconsistent with humanity to *sport* with the dearest possession of his fellow-creatures; and that to vilify and depreciate it—to render the gem suspected, and pass it upon the world disguised in the dirt it has contracted merely by going through his own hands, is a demonstration that he has neither charity, conscience, or common honesty. SERM. VII.

Now just such a neighbour are you. To you therefore I address my

Fourth and last motive to prevail on you, if possible, to chain up this unruly evil, till you have extracted its deadly poison.

SERM. VII.

"My brethren (ſays the Apoſtle of "JESUS CHRIST) be not many maſters;" that is, preſume not to elevate yourſelves into judges and cenſors over your fellow-creatures; "knowing (as he proceeds) "that ye ſhall receive *greater* damnation." Words of mighty and alarming import! Infallible truth itſelf not only aſſures us, that the ſlanderer ſhall be condemned; but condemned with greater ſeverity, and puniſhed with more grievous torment, to all eternity, for every ſentence he may have wantonly or maliciouſly paſſed during his whole life on the conduct of other men. And why? He immediately aſſigns the reaſon; and our own conſcience muſt neceſſarily ſecond and approve it:— "Becauſe (ſays he) in many things we "offend all." Yes! there are innumerable inſtances, GOD knows, in which we all fall ſhort of the rules of duty. And if unerring juſtice were extreme to mark what is done amiſs, even by the beſt and holieſt of men, who may abide it?

Since

SERM. VII.

Since then we are all *malefactors*, as certainly ſuch, in his ſight, to whom we muſt all render account, as thoſe two, who ſuffered with the Redeemer of the World upon the croſs, though not in the ſame degree; which of the two ſhall we imitate? Him, who waſted the laſt precious moments of his life in *railing and reviling?* or the other, who anſwered him, "Doſt "thou not fear GOD, *ſeeing thou thyſelf* "*art in the ſame condemnation?*" If the former; out of our own mouth may he condemn us; and as we could not have compaſſion on our fellow-ſervant, how ſhall we indulge a hope that in the hour of death and in the day of judgement, GOD will have pity on us? By no means:— have we not been ſolemnly warned beforehand, that *he* ſhall then have judgement without mercy, who hath ſhewed no mercy? One would think it impoſſible to hear this without terror, and an immediate reſolution of forbearance.

SERM. VII.

We admit, that our neighbour has probably done ſomething amiſs. Come then, let ſuch among us who are without ſin, firſt caſt the ſtone of ſlander at him. What! *we*, who had been everlaſtingly plunged into the blackeſt abyſs of deſpair, but that, in the divine counſels, mercy rejoiced againſt judgement;—*we*, whom a whole life of after-penitence could not have purified from the guilt of the moſt irreproachable year of our exiſtence, or ſpoke the leaſt comfort to our conſcious ſouls, but for the manifeſtation of this adorable attribute; ſhall we irretrievably forfeit all our title to it, and arm Omnipotence againſt ourſelves—fruſtrate that mighty work and labour of love, redemption, rather than renounce ſo mean, ſo contemptible a gratification?

We are ourſelves poor penſioners upon mercy for every neceſſary, comfort, and convenience of life, as well as for life itſelf. Our very bodies with all their functions are the work of mercy. Our

ſouls

ſouls with all their faculties are monuments of mercy. If we eſcape eternal perdition, what has reſcued us? Mercy. If we ever enter the manſions of bliſs; ſtill mercy, unmerited, adorable, infinite mercy muſt be our paſſport. And yet our very tongues reverſe the divine ordinance.

I think, however, you muſt, by this time, be convinced of the truth of Solomon's doctrine;—"he that hideth hatred "with lying lips, and he that uttereth "ſlander is a fool." Yes! a fool even in the ſcience of ſelf-love and ſelf-preſervation here upon Earth;—a fool in the plaineſt leſſons of juſtice and common honeſty; and in conſequence of both, a fool to all eternity.

And yet theſe are the great wits of the world, and wiſer in their own conceit than ſeven men, that can render a reaſon. But as certain as it is, that this wiſdom is not from above, but earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh; ſo notwithſtanding the acceptation it may be

SERM. VII.

be honoured with, in an envious and uncharitable world; the habitual exercisers of it will at last discover, to their eternal confusion, that it had been better for them to have been born blind, and deaf, and dumb, than to have used their eyes in prying after their neighbours' infirmities, their ears in hearing them with delight, and their tongues in blazoning the tale of reproach, calumny, and detraction.

The tongue indeed is but a little member, but unless it be duly regulated, the Apostle tells us, it is a fire, a world of iniquity, defiling the whole body, and setting on fire the course of nature; and therefore, says he, it shall be itself set on fire in Hell. According to that of St. John; "*without* (that is, for ever excluded from the regions of peace and happiness) are *dogs*;" for by that denomination is the cynical and snarling disposition of the slanderer repeatedly expressed in Scripture; "without, are dogs, and "whoremongers, and murderers, and "whosoever

"whoſoever loveth and maketh a lye." And ſo the great Apoſtle to the Gentiles: "Be not deceived; neither adulterers, nor "effeminate, nor abuſers of themſelves "with mankind, nor thieves, nor re-"vilers, ſhall inherit the Kingdom of "Heaven." SERM. VII.

You ſee then with what deteſtable offenders the wiſdom of GOD has claſſed them:—but I forbear—their own tongues are fitteſt to deſcribe ſuch complicated arrogance, impiety, injuſtice, diſhonour, and fooliſhneſs. And when they have finiſhed the vile portrait; Oh! that an awakened conſcience may, at that moment, ſpeak in thunder to the ſoul of every one of them;—"Thou art the "man!" "Repent therefore of this thy "wickedneſs, and pray GOD, if perhaps "the thoughts of thine heart may be "forgiven thee; for thou art in the gall "of bitterneſs, and in the bond of ini-"quity."

"Wo!

SERM. VII.

"Wo! unto the world, becauſe of "offences," or ſcandals; for it muſt needs be from the malignity of the human heart, that ſcandals ſhould come. "But woe unto that man, by whom "the ſcandal cometh: better were it for "him, that a millſtone were hanged about "his neck, and that he were drowned in "the depth of the ſea!"

Notwithſtanding all that has been ſaid; I freely confeſs to you, brethren, that I now conclude in utter deſpair of working any laſting good on the confirmed, habitual ſlanderer; convinced of the truth of the Apoſtle's obſervation;—"Every kind "of beaſt, and of birds, and of ſerpents, "is tamed, and hath been tamed of "mankind; but the tongue (ſays he) "can no man tame: it is an *unruly* evil, "full of deadly poiſon."

I have however diſcharged my own duty, in warning the ſinner of his evil ways; and may the Father of mercies, to whom nothing is impoſſible, ſanctify what

what has been now ſaid to the conviction and converſion of every one of us! SERM. VII.

Amen, O GOD, for JESUS CHRIST's ſake!

SERMON VIII.

THE PRESERVATIVE AGAINST INFIDELITY.

SERMON VIII.

The earth which drinketh in the rain, that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs, *meet for them by whom it is dreſſed, receiveth* bleſſing *from* GOD:
But that which beareth thorns and briars, is rejected, and is nigh unto curſing; whoſe end is to be burned.

Heb. vi. 7, 8.

SERM. VIII.

THE frequent and beautiful alluſions throughout the Sacred Writings, to *rural life*, conſtitute one of the greateſt ſources of that elegant and affecting ſimplicity of ſtyle, which ſo irreſiſtibly recommends them to men of real taſte and refined underſtanding.

SERM. VIII.

That *Deiſm* and *infidelity* have a natural tendency to weaken the judgement and deprave the apprehenſion, is ſufficiently demonſtrable from this alone;—that while the patrons of them affect to be thought the moſt conſummate judges of polite letters; and ſpeak with all the raptures of enthuſiaſm, on the beauties of prophane writers—hiſtorians, orators, and poets, they are incurably blind, and deaf to excellencies of the ſame kind in their *Bible*; although as much ſuperior to thoſe they pretend to admire, as the genius of true Religion is to Heatheniſm and Idolatry.

The truth is, it is not the *manner* of the Sacred Claſſics that they are firſt diſguſted with, but the *matter*. They can hardly open a page in them that does not point out the brutal folly of irreligion—expoſe the abſurdity of their principles, and ſhow the fatal conſequence of perſiſting in them. They cannot but *hate* what never prophefies *good* concerning them, but always *evil*.

To

SERM. VIII.

To commend Scripture, therefore, before them, and hold out its incomparable beauties, is to praiſe an *enemy*. They have no way to be tolerably eaſy in their preſent courſe of life, but vindictively to ſet their faces againſt it, and endeavour to perſuade themſelves and others, that men may be polite, without Religion, wiſe without Revelation, and happy without Chriſtianity.

Why therefore ſhould they ſearch the Scriptures? If you anſwer, that they may attain to a knowledge of eternal life; you give them another reaſon *againſt* the ſtudy. The thoughts of eternity to an habitual ſenſualiſt will put inſufferable bitterneſs in the cup of his pleaſures, and make him diſſatisfied as long as he lives.

Why ſhould he know what the Will of his GOD is, when he has long ſince determined, that his *own* will ſhall be the only rule of his conduct? The Prophets and Apoſtles can but reaſon with him of righteouſneſs, temperance, and judgement

SERM. VIII.

to come; and that perhaps may make him *tremble* on the very throne of his ſenſual kingdom. It is well therefore if he diſmiſs them with half the civility of *Felix*; —"Go thy ways for this time; when I "have a convenient ſeaſon, I will ſend for "thee." To be almoſt perſuaded to be a Chriſtian, is to be *altogether miſerable*; as long as the riches, honours, and pleaſures of the world are the only objects of a man's conſideration.

Every way therefore, it is their intereſt to be ignorant of the excellency of Scripture; and to take it for granted, that it really has no beauties that they ſhould love it, no form or comelineſs that they ſhould admire it. Now under the influence of ſuch prejudices, what fairneſs and impartiality can be expected? Their taſte muſt be vitiated in proportion to their licentiouſneſs, and their capacity to judge annihilated by their unwillingneſs to believe.

SERM. VIII.

Theſe moſt evident facts will, in ſome meaſure, help us to account for that inattention to the Sacred Writings, which is diſcernable at the preſent day, among thoſe, who paſs for men of great learning and ſingular abilities. They will ſhow, that we have no reaſon to be diſcouraged, becauſe the great wits of the world are pleaſed to neglect all public worſhip—to ridicule what we admire; and affect, in direct oppoſition to the ſpirit of the Apoſtle, to know any thing or every thing among us, ſave JESUS CHRIST, and him crucified.

No; it is our mighty conſolation to reflect, that while they are become *fools*—the moſt deplorable of all fools—though maſters, perhaps, of every branch of human ſcience, we may be wiſe unto Salvation without it. Thereby fulfilling that obſervation of our Apoſtle in his firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians: "Ye ſee, "brethren, how that not many *wiſe* men, "after the fleſh, are called to the effectual

SERM. VIII.

"knowledge of the Son of GOD; but he "hath choſen the *fooliſh* things of the "world to confound the *wiſe*, and the "weak to confound the mighty; that "JESUS CHRIST may be unto us, *wiſdom*, "and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, "and redemption."

Bleſſed, therefore, every way—"bleſſed "is the man that hath not walked in "the counſel of the ungodly, nor ſtood "in the way of ſinners, and hath not ſat "in the ſeat of the ſcornful; but whoſe "delight is in the Law of the Lord, and "in his Law hath exerciſed himſelf day "and night. He ſhall be like a tree "planted by the water-ſide, that will "bring forth his fruit in due ſeaſon, and "look! whatſoever he doeth, it ſhall "proſper."

We may, beſides, from hence acquire a ſure method of trying the ſtate of our own ſouls with reſpect to Religion;—as long as we read the Holy Scriptures with pleaſure and ſatisfaction, and prefer them as they

they really deſerve, before all other books in the world; we may reſt aſſured that our heart is right in the ſight of GOD—our eternal intereſts are ſafe—and that our moral ſenſe is advancing apace towards a ſtate of perfection. And, on the other hand, when we are ſo abſorbed in the things of the world as to reſume thoſe ſtudies with reluctance, and find them flat and ſpiritleſs, in compariſon with the faſhionable productions of the preſs;—*that*—that alone, ſhould ſound an alarm to our ſouls, and put us immediately upon examining our lives—convinced we ſhall ſoon diſcover ſome way of wickedneſs within us—ſome darling boſom ſin to be ejected, before it be poſſible for us to return, with ſincere reliſh, to that fountain of living waters. But if after all, we can contrive to ſatisfy ourſelves under an habitual neglect of them—or, which is ſtill worſe, can read with pleaſure ourſelves, and encourage others to read, the arguments, or rather the *inſinuations* of infidelity and

SERM. VIII.

SERM. VIII.

ſcepticiſm againſt the divine authority of the Holy Volume; there cannot be a ſhadow of doubt but that every ſpark of vital religion is dying away apace within us—we are in love with perdition, and every moment in danger of being ſealed up to inexorable vengeance for ever.

Concerning an *apoſtate*—that is, every one, who having been baptized, and educated in the faith of CHRIST, has contrived to argue himſelf into a *diſbelief* and habitual neglect of it, that he may purſue his worldly pleaſures without check or diſturbance—the condition of that man is abſolutely *hopeleſs*; he is out of the reach of all the ordinary means of Grace.

Our Apoſtle, having pathetically exhorted us, in the tenth chapter of this Epiſtle, to hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering, and for that purpoſe not to forſake the aſſembling ourſelves together in the public congregation of the Church, where the Word of GOD is read and explained; immediately ſubjoins

SERM. VIII.

ſubjoins this awful and alarming reaſon: "That if we ſin wilfully (reject the Goſpel of CHRIST and apoſtatize from the faith) "after that we have received the "knowledge of the truth, there remaineth "no more ſacrifice for ſin. But a certain "fearful looking for of judgement, and "fiery indignation, which ſhall devour "the adverſaries. For if he that deſpiſed "Moſes's Law died without mercy, of "how much ſorer puniſhment ſuppoſe ye, "ſhall *he* be thought worthy, who hath "trodden under foot the Son of GOD, and "counted the Blood of the Covenant a "*vain*, or unholy thing, and hath deli-"berately done deſpite unto the Spirit of "Grace."

An intereſting topic! which he had before moſt ſolemnly inſiſted upon, in the verſes immediately preceeding the text;—plainly telling us, by the Spirit of GOD, that "it is impoſ-"ſible—abſolutely impoſſible for thoſe, who "were once enlightened, and have taſted of "the Heavenly Gift, and were made partakers

"of

SERM. VIII.

"of the HOLY GHOST, by baptiſm (have had the Scriptures put into their hands) "having taſted (ſays he) the good Word "of GOD, and the powers of the world "to come; if after this, they ſhall fall "away from the faith, they are in a worſe "condition than unconverted Heathens "and Idolaters;—it is *impoſſible* to *renew* "them again unto repentance. Becauſe "ſuch men crucify to themſelves the Son "of GOD afreſh, and put him to open "ſhame."

Having thus ſhown us the horrible preſumption and *fooliſhneſs* of their conduct, he next proceeds in the words, which I ſelected for your preſent meditations, to exemplify their brutiſh and deteſtable *ingratitude*; which could not fail to draw down on their defenceleſs heads the fearful and everlaſting wrath of GOD;—of that once kind and loving father, whoſe bleſſed ſuccours (like ſeaſonable and refreſhing ſhowers on a parched land) of which others have availed themſelves

to

to their eternal happineſs, they have impiouſly converted into a mean of offending him. "The earth, which drinketh in "the rain, that cometh oft upon it, and "bringeth forth herbs meet for them by "whom it is dreſſed, receiveth bleſſing from "GOD. But that which beareth thorns "and briars *only* is rejected and nigh unto "curſing; whoſe end is to be burned." SERM. VIII.

By which words, thus explained by the context, we are taught,

In the firſt place, the happineſs of thoſe ſincere, humble Chriſtians who conſcientiouſly avail themſelves of the ſuccours of Divine Grace, continually offered to the Church by the miniſtry of the Goſpel. "The earth, which drinketh in "the rain, that cometh oft upon it, and "bringeth forth herbs meet for them by "whom it is dreſſed, receiveth *bleſſing* "*from* GOD."

And

SERM. VIII.

And in the ſecond place, the unnatural ingratitude, and dreadful puniſhment of all ſuch, who in ſpite of the revealed Will of GOD, and the culture of his Holy Spirit, obſtinately continue Infidels in their principles, and Heathens in their practice. "That which (notwithſtanding this rain "from Heaven) beareth thorns and briars "*only* (the noxious weeds of immorality "and vice) is rejected, and nigh unto "curſing; whoſe end is to be burned."

To juſtify this explication of the text, and put it beyond all reaſonable doubt and exception; I beg leave to refer you to that beautiful parable of the *ſower*, in the eighth chapter of St. Luke; where the character of the former is emphatically deſcribed by the ſame figure from rural life, and explained by CHRIST himſelf. "The good "ground (ſays he) are they, which in an "honeſt and good heart, having heard "the Word, keep it; and bring forth "fruit unto perfection. So the *bad* are, not

"not they who never heard of the Goſpel —but who, when they have heard, ſuffer the Devil to take away the ſeed of the "Word out of their hearts, leſt they ſhould "believe and be ſaved; or, who go forth, "and are choked with the cares and riches "and pleaſures of this world, and bring "no fruit to perfection." SERM. VIII.

To do juſtice to *either* of theſe topics would carry me to the utmoſt extent of time generally allowed to diſcourſes of this kind. Of the *firſt* therefore, I ſhall only obſerve that the happineſs, reſulting from the knowledge and practice of rational religion, can be deſcribed to thoſe alone who already *feel* it. The Bleſſing of GOD is already warm at their hearts: A ſource of holy comfort actually fulfilling, in the pooreſt and meaneſt ſervant of JESUS CHRIST, all that philoſophy for ſo many ages of the world but vainly promiſed: Teaching them to regard this life merely as a ſtate of probation for a better—conſequently rendering them ſuperior both to

SERM. VIII.

the blandiſhments and terrors of the world. Their treaſure is in Heaven, there are their hearts alſo;—not rivetted down to the things of Earth, which are by their very nature uncertain and unſatisfactory, but depending on the glory, which ſhall hereafter be revealed, when the divine huſbandman, JEHOVAH, their Redeemer, ſhall appear to reap the travail of his ſoul, and reward their improvement of thoſe bleſſed ſuccours of grace and ſanctification, ſo abundantly diſpenſed in the vineyard of his Church, with eternal life and infinite happineſs. They have drank in by the miniſtry of GOD's Word the rain of the Holy Spirit, and brought forth herbs meet for him by whom their ſouls were cultivated—even the acceptable fruits of faith, hope, and charity, or univerſal benevolence; without which whoſoever liveth, is counted dead before GOD.

"He therefore who crowneth the year "with his goodneſs, and whoſe clouds "drop down fatneſs, who viſiteth the

"earth

"earth and bleſſeth it, yea and maketh it "very plenteouſneſs; who watereth her "furrows, and ſendeth rain into the little "valleys thereof; who maketh it ſoft with "the drops of rain, and bleſſeth the in-"creaſe of it;"—will not fail to ſend them the healthful ſpirit of his grace, and to pour down upon them the continual dew of his bleſſing. SERM. VIII.

May GOD confirm this truth to the heart of every one of us, for JESUS CHRIST's ſake!

But the principal uſe which I intended to make of the text, was to offer you a ſeaſonable antidote againſt the poiſon of infidel books, and profane, infidel converſation, which to the unſpeakable affliction of every wiſe and good man, are inſenſibly ſeducing thouſands from the faith, to the certain weakening of their moral powers, and the probable ruin of their immortal ſouls.

Now that the opinions and deciſions of ſuch writers and ſuch talkers have no weight

SERM. VIII.

weight of reaſon in them, and conſequently, deſerve no deference, muſt be evident to the meaneſt capacity from the following conſiderations:

It is well known, that two of the greateſt moral Philoſophers that ever lived, where *revelation* had not reached—*Confucius* and *Socrates*, from a thorough conviction of the univerſal ignorance of mankind with reſpect to Religion, ſolemnly declared their opinion and belief, that GOD himſelf the Father of the Univerſe would one time or other, ſend down from Heaven a Divine Perſon, on purpoſe to inſtruct them in the right and moſt acceptable manner of worſhipping him; and to give them the moſt holy and perfect rules of life.

They argued from a heart-felt conviction of the inſufficiency of human reaſon; the neceſſity of the caſe, and the nature of the Supreme Being.

Of ſuch a perſon, we inſiſt, expreſs notices were given by GOD himſelf in all ages of the world; and that, in the appointed

pointed time, he actually was ſent from Heaven to publiſh the Divine *Will*, concerning the redemption and ſalvation of mankind, and to be the inſtrument of it. We believe upon the fulleſt evidence, that he came as an infallible teacher, with a divine commiſſion, to reſtore religion to its original purity; to declare the moſt acceptable worſhip of the one GOD, and to promiſe an immortal ſtate of happineſs to all, who through faith in his name, and obedience to the doctrine of his Goſpel, endeavour to attain to it. SERM. VIII.

The Divinity of this diſpenſation, we inſiſt, has been abundantly demonſtrated by every ſpecies of evidence the nature of the thing is capable of. By prophecies, and their completion; by miracles; by its own internal evidence; by its aſtoniſhing ſucceſs; by its perfect agreeableneſs to human reaſon; and above all, by its univerſally improving the moral and religious knowledge of mankind.

SERM. VIII.

But now what is the conduct of the modern infidel or *Deiſt*, with reſpect to this diſpenſation? Why, inſtead of fairly and impartially *examining the evidence*, as the importance of the ſubject demands—he generally ſets out with taking it for granted that all is impoſition, forgery, and prieſtcraft. To confirm himſelf in this childiſh prejudice, he ſtudies with greedineſs, and gives the moſt implicit belief to all, that the pride of ſcience, falſely ſo called, has been able to object againſt it; at the ſame time rejecting every argument, on the other ſide, as vulgar and unphiloſophical. This, with a total diſregard to Scripture, and an habitual, indecent, ſcandalous neglect of all public worſhip, becauſe in GOD's temple he would be in danger of hearing ſome of his illiberal prejudices expoſed, is at preſent the regular progreſs from Chriſtianity to Deiſm. So that his principles are evidently founded on his own luſts—his diſbelief, or ignorance; his deciſions on the moſt deſpicable

cable partiality, and his ſingularity on pride. SERM. VIII.

And yet you will always find ſuch an one fuller of himſelf, and wiſer in his own conceit than ſeven men that can render a reaſon. For inſtead of *reaſons*—manly, ſubſtantial reaſons againſt the evidences of revelation; he will put you off with a catalogue of *difficulties* in it, that have been obviated perhaps a thouſand times before he was born.

Every man knows there is not an object the moſt familiar to our ſenſes which is not pregnant with qualities, eluding our ſevereſt ſcrutiny. But what then? do we ever ſuffer ourſelves to be perſuaded out of the uſe of the neceſſaries of life, till ſome philoſopher ſhall take upon himſelf fully to *explain* thoſe qualities? By no means; at this rate the world would be ſtarved. And is there any more reaſon for us to reject the *Bread of Life*, which came down from Heaven for the ſtrengthening and refreſhing of our

SERM. VIII.

ſouls; becauſe ſome of the doctrines of the Goſpel touching the nature of the Supreme Being, and the manner of his relation to us, are, in ſome reſpects, ſuperior to our underſtanding?

The plain ſtate of the caſe, in one word, is this: GOD has been pleaſed in his infinite goodneſs to offer us Salvation by Faith in JESUS CHRIST, and obedience to his Goſpel. The modern infidel does not chooſe to accept of it; till he perfectly conceives *how* faith and obedience are productive of ſuch an effect. The Chriſtian is contented to leave that to GOD Almighty, ſatisfied that he has the means of Salvation before him; the *other* returns them upon GOD's hands, as not worth his acceptance; and obſtinately chooſes to periſh, rather than apply a medicine, which though infallible, produces its effect in a manner which he does not thoroughly comprehend.

Now till this can be reconciled to ſome known principle of prudence and common ſenſe,

ſenſe, the modern infidel is a fool *convicted*; and the greatneſs of his fooliſhneſs can only be appreciated by its conſequences, which are indeed infinite and unſpeakable. SERM. VIII.

For conſider the horrible *ingratitude* of ſuch a conduct. In order to qualify us, for eternal happineſs and glory, GOD in his tender love for the ſouls of men, hath been pleaſed with an holy ſolicitude—if I may ſo ſpeak—to give us by degrees, a perfect revelation of himſelf and of his will, that our ignorance might not be our ruin. Such is the higheſt ſcheme of Divine Providence (we have reaſon to believe) from the beginning of the world to the conſummation of all things.

Indeed before the coming of the Redeemer in perſon, this bleſſing was reſtrained to the Children of Iſrael; as if the more forcibly to convince the reſt of mankind of the indiſpenſable *neceſſity* of ſuch a revelation. For mere human *reaſon*, with its utmoſt exertion, could not then deliver

SERM. VIII.

even the greateſt Philoſophers—Pythagoras, Socrates, or Plato, from groſs idolatry and ſuperſtition. And as to the bulk of the people, though in other reſpects wiſe, learned, and polite, it is a ſhame even to ſpeak of the abominable impurities, which they practiſed, under the name of Religion.

The Jewiſh Church, who alone enjoyed the divine inſtruction, was GOD's only vineyard upon Earth; his peculiar incloſure: all but the ſeed of Jacob were excluded by their intractable ſtupidity, as wild uncultivated trees, and long left to themſelves in the wilderneſs of the world. And when this leſſon of the inſufficiency of reaſon had been thus inculcated for ages, and pure Religion never found in one ſingle ſpot of the world, where revelation had not reached; then was that fulneſs of time, in which GOD ſhould take pity on the *reſt* of the poſterity of Adam. He then enlarged his vineyard, and gave unlimited admiſſion to all, that ſhould ſubmit to the miſſion and word of his eternal Son; whom he

he ſent to break down the partition-wall, and make the vineyard coextenſive with human nature; ordaining him the great dreſſer thereof, the head and governor of his *univerſal* Church; that through the excellency of his Doctrines, and thoſe of his Servants, to the end of the world, his new plantation might thrive and flouriſh, and bring forth fruit meet for him by whom it is dreſſed;—even a ſpiritual Religion, worthy of ſuch a Being as GOD to accept, and naturally perfective of the moral virtue and true happineſs of man, in and by the very act of offering it. But this was not all, ſince it coſt more to redeem ſouls than the bare labour of inceſſant inſtruction;—this only-begotten Son of the eternal GOD, with ineffable, unparallelled benevolence, actually laid down his life—ſuffered a cruel and ignominious death, as a malefactor—freely poured out his precious blood upon the croſs, to ſatisfy the Divine Juſtice in our ſtead.

SERM. VIII.

SERM. VIII.

And is there a reaſonable creature that can behold ſo auguſt a character, and not venerate it, a name ſo kind, and amiable, and beneficent, and not love it? Shall the generous fervours and tender ſympathy of our earthly friends call forth our grateful acknowledgements, and ſhall the unbounded compaſſion of the univerſal philanthropiſt, who hath done and ſuffered ſuch mighty things for our happineſs and Salvation, inſpire us with no ſentiments of eſteem and gratitude? Oh! the hard hearts of proud, ſenſual, and irreligious men!

Nay, ſtill more; after dying for our juſtification, ſtill attentive to our wants and weakneſſes—unwilling that any ſhould periſh—he, with an holy care, appointed his Apoſtles and Confeſſors, to reſume the benevolent taſk. They cheerfully ſubmitted to a life of inceſſant labour, pain, and poverty, to carry the glad tidings of univerſal Redemption into the remoteſt corners of the earth—preached the Goſpel

to

to every creature, and at laſt ſealed the truth of it with their blood. SERM. VIII.

And when, many ages afterwards, the ſimplicity of the Goſpel had been corrupted through the cunning craftineſs of *Popiſh* deceivers; GOD by his Holy Spirit raiſed up another ſet of wiſe and venerable men, as Champions in the cauſe of religious liberty, and enabled them once more to reconcile Religion to reaſon, and both to Revelation. It was the peculiar happineſs of the inhabitants of theſe iſlands to enjoy all the fruits of their labours, by which the Church of England is become, both in doctrine and worſhip, the glory of the whole earth. Now what could have been done more to this vineyard, that GOD hath not already done in it? *He hath planted it in a very fruitful hill*—a land of ſcience and mental elevation—and *fenced it* by his continual providence from the malice of its enemies; *gathered out the ſtones thereof*—purging it from all the abſurdities of Popery, which had long been ſtones of ſtumbling and rocks

SERM. VIII.

rocks of offence to men of ſober reaſon and enquiry. *He hath built a tower in the midſt of it*—guarded it by the civil magiſtrate; ordaining Kings for its nurſing fathers, and Queens for its nurſing mothers. *He hath moreover made a wine-preſs therein*—ſupplied it with all the neceſſaries of holy inſtruction. Yes! we have the Book of GOD faithfully tranſlated into our own language; we have a liturgy extracted from it, pure, rational, manly, and devout, beyond any in the known world—equally removed from the childiſh fopperies of ſuperſtition on the one hand, and all the ſullen ſlovenlineſs of fanaticiſm on the other. We are here admitted to all the privileges of Redemption by early baptiſm, and are continually invited to a reception of the *whole* Sacrament of CHRIST's Body and Blood, as the propereſt conveyance of Divine Grace, to enable us in every ſtation of life to bring forth our fruit unto holineſs, and attain to the end of our faith—everlaſting life;—even an intimate union with GOD,

GOD, the fountain of all perfection, wiſdom, and happineſs, to all eternity. SERM. VIII.

And are there thoſe among us, who can treat all this as a matter of indifference?—who can reflect on the mighty work and labour of Divine Love, without even a wiſh to be partakers of it? Nay, who can even think to eſtabliſh a kind of reputation for ſuperior *wiſdom*, by rejecting it? who can tax their underſtanding, which the Goſpel alone hath enlightened, for weapons againſt the Goſpel? Slaves of abſurdity and ingratitude! if there be any ſuch among us, to you I addreſs myſelf.—Pauſe—conſider a moment—your eternal intereſts are at ſtake—We are ready to demonſtrate in oppoſition to all the arguments of ſcepticiſm and infidelity, that there is none other name under Heaven, given among men, whereby ye can be ſaved, but that of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth; neither is there Salvation in any other.

If

SERM. VIII.

If you will not ſo much as *hear* the evidence in favour of Chriſtianity, neither from the Goſpels, nor from the words and writings of its Miniſters, how will you juſtify yourſelves in *rejecting* it, upon any principles of equity and prudence? Uſe the proper *means* of *information* but for a year—but for a month—make the Holy Scriptures your ſtudy—pray to the Fountain of all Wiſdom for his aſſiſtance—attend the public worſhip with ſincerity—abſtain from the pollutions of the world but for a week, that ye may be cool and ſober for examination;—and the conſequence will certainly be, that many of you, who now *uſe* the *curious* artifices of Deiſm to lull your conſciences aſleep, will be ready to *bring your books together*, by which your principles were firſt debauched, *and to burn them before all men*. And though the price ſhould be found fifty thouſand pieces of ſilver, you will then confeſs it to be fifty thouſand times too little for the excellency

excellency of the knowledge of the truth, as it is in CHRIST JESUS our Lord. SERM. VIII.

But have any of you actually uſed theſe means? Have you read and conſidered the anſwers that have been given to thoſe books? Have you ever ſpent even a ſingle day, in examining impartially the evidences of Chriſtianity, from prophecies and miracles only? If not, you are no more capable of deciding fairly upon a point of ſuch infinite importance, than a judge would be of adminiſtering impartial juſtice, in a doubtful cauſe, who ſhould hear and believe all the teſtimony of witneſſes on one ſide only, and not ſuffer the others even to ſpeak.

Notwithſtanding declamation, petulance, ſcurrility, and ſophiſtry, the truth of Chriſtianity may be capable of ſtrict, literal demonſtration. And then what is the conſequence? You have, with unparallelled ingratitude and folly, rejected the counſel of GOD againſt your own ſoul—, fruſtrated the purpoſes of uncreated benevolence—

SERM. VIII.

volence—abuſed the means of grace and mercy—and wilfully and obſtinately incurred the wrath of Omnipotence:—in one word, you are irretrievably condemned. Conſider, but a ſingle moment, by whom, and upon what authority thoſe awful words were ſpoken: "Go ye into all the "world, and preach the Goſpel to every "creature; he that believeth and is bap-"tized ſhall be ſaved; BUT HE THAT BE-"LIEVETH NOT SHALL BE DAMNED."

I leave this upon your minds: and ſhall cloſe my diſcourſe with a ſhort addreſs to you, my *believing* brethren, to whoſe ſafety and edification I am content to devote the poor labours of my life; and it ſhall be in the words of the bleſſed Apoſtle. "I have ſaid this for your ſakes "chiefly, leſt any man ſhould beguile you "with enticing words. As *ye* have re-"ceived CHRIST JESUS the Lord, ſo "walk ye in him: rooted and built up in "him and eſtabliſhed in the faith, as ye "have been taught, abounding therein

"with

SERM. VIII.

" with thankſgiving. Beware, therefore, " leſt any man ſpoil you, and corrupt your " ſouls, through *pretended* philoſophy, and " vain deceit, after the tradition of men, " after the rudiments of the world, and " not after CHRIST. For in him " dwelleth all the fulneſs of the Godhead " bodily :"—the fulneſs of divine *wiſdom* in teaching mankind—of *mercy* in forgiving—of *love* in redeeming—of *power* in rewarding—and of *juſtice* in puniſhing!

To him therefore be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON IX.

PHILANTHROPY;

A DISCOURSE FOR PALM-SUNDAY.

SERMON IX.

Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-ſpeaking be put away from you, with all malice.

And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another; even as GOD *for* CHRIST'*s ſake hath forgiven you.*

Eph. iv. 31, 32.

SERM. IX.

IT is the obſervation of an inſpired writer that "where envying and ſtrife is, "there is confuſion and every evil work." And therefore it is that our merciful Creator ſo frequently and ſo importunately, in his Holy Word, exhorts us to mutual love—perſuading us to extirpate the malignity of our furious paſſion and to

SERM. IX.

"be kindly affectioned one towards an-
"other."

And our progreſs in this benevolent undertaking may be very advantageouſly regulated by that pathetic exhortation of the great Apoſtle which I have ſelected for the ſubject of your preſent meditations.

"Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and
"anger, and clamour, and evil-ſpeaking,
"be put away from you with all malice.
"And be ye kind one to another—tender-
"hearted, forgiving one another, even as
"GOD, for CHRIST's ſake, hath forgiven
"you."

In which Scripture are enumerated,

In the firſt place, the vices, which are contrary to the ſpirit of domeſtic, civil, and religious peace;

And ſecondly, the virtues of which it conſiſts.

Theſe, as they are arranged in the text, ſhall, without any other order or diviſion, conſtitute the topics of my following diſcourſe.

And

SERM. IX.

And may that eternal GOD, and Heavenly Father, who alone maketh men to be of one mind in a houſe, aſſiſt us by the ſweet influences of his Grace to diveſt our ſouls of every thing that bears a reſemblance to the former, and to clothe them with the amiable graces of the latter: that we may live together in unity and godly love here upon earth, and eternal happineſs and glory hereafter in Heaven!

Firſt, then, among the vices condemned, we are to put away all *bitterneſs*. By which is to be underſtood that malignity of ſpirit, which makes us regard our neighbours, with envy, hatred, and averſion. As when St. Peter ſays to Simon Magus, "Repent of thy wicked-"neſs, and pray GOD, if perhaps the "thought of thine heart may be forgiven "thee; for I perceive thou art in the gall "of *bitterneſs* and in the bond of iniquity." Or as when our Apoſtle admoniſhes his Hebrew converts, to "follow peace with

SERM. IX.

"all men, and holineſs; and to look dili-
"gently leſt any root of *bitterneſs* ſhould
"ſpring up, to trouble and defile them."

But the ſcope of the Epiſtle determines the Word to ſignify that truly diabolical habit of ſoul, which we expreſs by miſanthropy, or an inveterate hatred of mankind in general:—Proceeding not from the temperament of bilious or melancholy humours—not from ſickneſs and bodily infirmities, which naturally render us fretful, and impatient; but from the interior corruption and voluntary malice of the heart:—which excites a vicious diſguſt towards our fellow-creatures, makes us interpret their words and actions in the worſt ſenſe, and nouriſh in our minds a ſecret ſuſpicion, diſcontent, and ill-will againſt all we know—extracting pleaſure from their very misfortunes and diſappointments.

A principle ſo peculiarly flagitious, that as no excuſes can extenuate, ſo no aggravation can make it worſe; which, whatever

whatever inconvenience it may be productive of to other men, inflicts an infinitely greater torment on its owner—renders him a diſgrace to human nature—the abhorrence of all good beings—a voluntary ambaſſador from the author of all malice, and a candidate for wretchedneſs. SERM. IX.

Above all things, therefore, this great maſter in the ſcience of Salvation enjoins us—exhorts us for JESUS CHRIST's ſake, whoſe whole immenſe work and labour of love it has a neceſſary tendency to fruſtrate—by *all* means, to retrench this accurſed root of *bitterneſs*, which eaſily ſprings up in the black ſoil of ſome hearts, and caſts a baneful ſhade on all thoſe, whom by every law of Nature, Neighbourhood and Grace, we ſhould endeavour to regard in the moſt favourable light.

"This is a word on every ſide clothed "about with death. GOD grant that it be "no more found in the heritage of Jacob, "for all ſuch things ſhould be far from the

SERM. IX.

"godly, and they may not wallow in theſe "unpardonable ſins."

But it is not enough that we lay the axe to the root of *this* tree; the health of our ſouls is ſtill in danger, if we retain the leaſt part of its envenomed fruit. St. Paul therefore enjoins us to put away WRATH, and ANGER likewiſe. By the former of theſe we are to underſtand the firſt emotions we feel within ourſelves, on the apprehenſion of an injury; and by the latter that diſpleaſure and reſentment which excite a deſire of revenge.

But here we muſt diſtinguiſh. For when the Apoſtle inſerts *anger* and *wrath*, in the catalogue of unchriſtian vices, he muſt not be underſtood as condemning thoſe paſſions in the abſtract. Becauſe being planted in us by the Author of our original nature, they cannot be in themſelves culpable. And in the chapter before us he ſpeaks of them as entirely innocent; nay ſeems to recommend them, under ſome circumſtances, as honourable

SERM. IX.

and neceſſary. "Be ye angry (ſays he, at "the twenty-ſixth verſe) and ſin *not.*" As was evidently the caſe, when our bleſſed Lord, tranſported with indignation againſt the ſordid profaners of his Father's houſe, forcibly drove them out even with cords. CHRIST's pattern and precept are of equal perfection, and the imitation of his life and actions, is the ſame thing as obedience to his laws.

But when, on the contrary, this paſſion is excited on inadequate occaſions; when we endeavour to gratify our own furious impatience rather than advance the glory of GOD, or the advantage of ſociety; then is our reſentment injurious, diſhonourable, and wicked. "The wrath of *man* (ſays "St. James, deſcribing this unreaſonable, "and ſelf-gratifying fury—the effect of "pride and folly) the wrath of man "worketh not the righteouſneſs of GOD." Plainly intimating that when the object of it, is *revenge* inſtead of *redreſs*, it is impious and unjuſt. Hence that affectionate caution

SERM. IX.

caution of our Apoſtle to the Romans—"Dearly beloved, *avenge* not yourſelves, "but rather give place unto wrath;" rather ſubmit to an injury than offer one; "for it is written vengeance is mine, I will "repay, ſaith the Lord."

Shame, ſeal up thy mouth for ever, and arreſt thy rebellious arm, thou abſurd and flagitious child of modern *honour!* thou challenger and duelliſt—who wouldeſt eſtabliſh a prepoſterous reputation among fools and atheiſts, like thyſelf, by thoſe very means, which, in the ſight of all-wiſe and good beings, will brand thee with eternal infamy!

Art thou a Chriſtian? remember thy ſolemn, baptiſmal vows. Art thou a man? no. He that ſuffers himſelf to be caſt to and fro, and toſt about with every blaſt of intemperate anger, degenerates into a reſemblance of furies and wild beaſts. He renounces his reaſon, is every moment in danger of making ſhipwreck of his peace here, and of his happineſs hereafter.

What

What ſecurity is there that ſuch an one may not the next moment, upon an imaginary injury, murther his deareſt friend upon earth, make his wife a widow, and ſend his innocent orphans, like fugitives and vagabonds to beg and ſeek their bread, out of deſolate places. This ſhort and voluntary madneſs—as the ancients emphatically called it—is productive of more laſting fatal evils to ſociety, than the moſt violent, natural inſanity. SERM. IX.

But admitting that I have really received from my neighbour a great injury; muſt I therefore do myſelf a greater, deſtroy the peace of my own ſoul, and incur the diſpleaſure of Omnipotence, to be revenged? Tell me, if this can ſound like reaſon to any but madmen and fools? Indeed all the arguments that ever have been offered in defence of private vengeance, are as weak as they are wicked, as inhuman and diſhonourable, as they are irreligious. Even a poor ignorant Heathen could tell us,

SERM. IX.

us, that the very word, *revenge*, was utterly indecent and unmanly.

To this ſolemn prohibition of *wrath* and *anger*, the Apoſtle adds, CLAMOR and EVIL-SPEAKING; which are but other productions from the ſame deſtructive root of *bitterneſs*. Againſt both which there are ſo many tremendous cautions in Scripture, that whoever ſtudies the Book of GOD, would be ready to conclude there are no ſuch vices among thoſe who profeſs and call themſelves Chriſtians; did not his knowledge of the world, ſo repeatedly convince him of the contrary, as almoſt to bring in doubt the exiſtence of ſuch cautions. Inconſiſtent creatures that we are! to confeſs that "If any man "among us, ſeemeth to be religious, and "bridleth not his tongue, that man's Reli-"gion is *vain*;" and to indulge our own in ſuch licentiouſneſs of ſlander, that neither age, ſex, ſtation, or character, can ſecure our neighbour's reputation. It is no uncommon thing to find perſons of this temper, even

even arrogating merit, for their ingenuity at inſinuating detraction. As if it was a great exertion of wiſdom to talk their neighbour out of eſteem, and themſelves out of *Salvation*, with the ſame breath. Or as if that character, in the Proverbs, was venerable for its wit, rather than contemptible for its wickedneſs: "He "winketh with his eyes, he ſpeaketh "with his feet, he teacheth with his fin-"gers. Frowardneſs is in his heart, he "deviſeth miſchief continually, he ſoweth "diſcord." It is a melancholy truth, that the fame of many an innocent woman, the honour of the gentleman, and the credit of the merchant and induſtrious tradeſman, have been irretrievably undermined and ruined by ſuch artifices.—Whatever ſuch men's opinion may be of themſelves, the great Philoſopher makes no ſcruple to give it as *his*, "that he that "hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that "uttereth ſlander is a fool."

As

SERM. IX.

As in the viſion of Elias, "the Lord "was not in the wind, which rent the "mountains, nor in the earthquake, "which brake in pieces the rocks, nor in "the fire, which violently ſcattered his "flames, but in the *ſtill and ſmall voice*;" ſo if we would reaſonably hope to keep up any ſenſe of *Religion* within us, we muſt baniſh all ſuch turbulent and miſchievous paſſions from our breaſts, and endeavour to poſſeſs our ſouls in meekneſs, and univerſal benevolence.

Hence the Apoſtle is ſo ſolicitous to diveſt us likewiſe of all *malice*. It is not enough that we prune away the principal branches of our natural corruption: If any *ſeeds* of it are ſuffered to remain within us, they will be ever liable to ſpring up with fatal luxuriancy, and irremediably poiſon the ſoul that cheriſhed them.—There are people in the world, who while reſentment is rankling at their hearts, can yet ſo far command themſelves as to abſtain from clamour and evil-ſpeaking—nay who diſguiſe

diſguiſe their reſolutions of revenge, with every ſpecious mark of reconciliation and friendſhip; thereby putting their neighbour off his guard, that they may with more advantage plunge the dagger of malice in his unſuſpecting boſom. But this is a temper of mind too horrible to be borne even in deſcription—treacherous—diſhonourable, and unmanly as that of *Jaël* the wife of *Heber*, the *Kenite*, lulling to ſleep, with ſweet milk out of the bottle; that they may with more ſecurity ſtrike a nail through his temples, and ſmite off the head. It is hardly poſſible for an honeſt mind to hear *David*'s lamentation under ſuch circumſtances without acknowledging the juſtice of his indignation. "It is not an open enemy "that hath done me this diſhonour, for "then I could have borne it. Neither "was it mine adverſary that did magnify "himſelf againſt me; for then peradven-"ture I would hide myſelf from him.— "But it was even *thou*, my companion,

SERM. IX.

SERM. IX.

"guide, and mine own familiar friend.
"We took ſweet counſel together, and
"walked in the Houſe of GOD as friends."
"Let death come haſtily upon them, and
"let them go down quick into the pit;
"for *abominable* wickedneſs is in their
"dwellings."

Behold then, my brethren, in their native deformity, the great enemies of our ſocial happineſs and peace. *Bitterneſs, wrath, clamour, evil-ſpeaking*, and *malice*.

But let us now turn our eyes from this black ſide of human nature, and contemplate,

In the ſecond place, thoſe amiable virtues and graces, recommended by the benevolent ſervant of GOD, as fit ſucceſſors for thoſe vices, which muſt, at the peril of our ſouls, be univerſally ejected. "Be ye kind one to another—tender-
"hearted, forgiving one another, even as
"GOD,

"GOD for CHRIST's ſake, hath forgiven "you." SERM. IX.

Where by *kindneſs* is meant that humanity or ſoftneſs of diſpoſition, which induces us to *love* our *neighbour* in the utmoſt latitude and extent of the word; to make all reaſonable allowance for his difference of ſentiment, failings, and infirmities—for the ſake of peace to recede ſomething from the rigour of ſtrict juſtice—rather to ſubmit to a few inconveniences, than diſturb the public repoſe—to think well of all things that are not evidently evil, or of a pernicious tendency, to ſpeak kindly *of* all men, and *to* all men; and to put the faireſt conſtruction we poſſibly can upon their principles, converſation, and conduct. It is a ſtriking feature in Lemuel's portrait of a good woman—that ſhe openeth her mouth with wiſdom, and in her tongue is the *law of kindneſs*. This law is the regulating principle, of every thought, word, and action of the genuine Philanthropiſt—and is as evi-

SERM. IX.

dently calculated to dignify and adorn nature, as the *bitterneſs*, which we have juſt condemned, is to ſink and diſgrace it.

By its congenial virtue *tender-heartedneſs*, is ſignified pity or compaſſion—ſuch a condeſcenſion to the infirmities of human nature, as will render us indulgent to the faults and follies, and deſirous of wiping away all the ſorrows, of our fellow-creatures. It is not that complimental *profeſſion* of eſteem, ſo faſhionable at the preſent day, which may as well be a *cloak* of *maliciouſneſs*—to the diſgrace of manhood, too, too often ſo—as an indication of kindneſs. St. James ſeems to have had his eye upon ſuch characters in his days; "If a brother or ſiſter be "naked, and deſtitute of daily food, and "one of you ſay unto them, 'Depart in "peace, be ye warmed and filled"—that is, diſmiſs them with good words and wiſhes only—"notwithſtanding ye give "them not thoſe things which are needful

to

"to the body; what doth it profit?"— This tongue-charity is, under the Goſpel, one of the moſt deſpicable modes of *hypocriſy*. Chriſtian benevolence, like faith, muſt be evidenced, not by our good *words* only, but by our good *works*. The virtue recommended by the text, is in the original peculiarly emphatical, and expreſſive. It denotes that *yearning* love, which proceeds from the very *heart* and *bowels*; like the tender, melting affections of a fond mother towards her own child. And without poſitive acts of charity towards the indigent and diſtreſſed, and benevolence towards all, the ſounding braſs, and tinkling cymbal of mere profeſſion, though we ſpeak with the tongue of men and of angels—is as nothing, or worſe than nothing. SERM. IX.

From this internal diſpoſition—this bowel-love alone—can proceed that generous *forgiveneſs* of injuries, that readineſs to mutual reconciliation, and acts of friendſhip, charity, and benevolence, ſo earneſtly

SERM. IX.

recommended by the Apoſtle. And what a truly noble and magnanimous principle is this! It lifts a man, as it were, above the condition of *human* nature, and elevates him to a reſemblance even of the angelic, and divine. It makes us reſemble GOD in his moſt amiable property of *doing good*, and in the happineſs—the exalted and durable happineſs reſulting from it. For let me appeal to the heart of every man, Did any one ever encourage a ſentiment of compaſſion for the poor and needy—Did ever any man receive the penitent, or forgive an injury—Did he e ver ſeek for reconciliation with an old friend—without feeling an immediate recompence in the pleaſure of an eaſy, ſelf-approving mind? No; even in this ſenſe our Lord's obſervation is experimentally true; "It is "more bleſſed to give than to receive." To this moſt refined, ſentimental luxury, you are now more particularly invited by the ſolemnities of the ſeaſon. "Is not "this the *faſt* that I have choſen (ſays the

"eternal Object of our Adoration) to "looſe the bands of wickedneſs: to deal "thy bread to the hungry, and that thou "bring the poor that are caſt out to thy "houſe? when thou ſeeſt the naked, that "thou cover him? and that thou hide not "thyſelf from thine own fleſh?" To all theſe ſelf-recommending duties you are excited in the text by the moſt irreſiſtible and endearing motive that ever was ſuggeſted to the ſoul of man. "Be ye kind "one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving "one-another, even as GOD, for CHRIST's "ſake hath forgiven you." Yes, my brethren, ſuch was the ineffable goodneſs of the GOD of Glory to us poor creatures, that inſtead of puniſhing our uninterrupted rebellion againſt him, he was graciouſly pleaſed, to invent a mean of reconciling his mercy to his juſtice by ſending his own dearly-beloved Son to take our nature upon him, and to dye for the ſins of the world. Oh, my ſoul! never, never loſe ſight of the amazing truth. The Son of SERM. IX.

SERM. IX.

God, who was clothed with majeſty and honour, who covereth himſelf with light as with a garment, diſdained not for us men and for our Salvation to come down from Heaven; to be made lower than his ſervants the Angels—even to be made man. He came into the world a tender, helpleſs infant, was wrapped in ſwaddling clothes, lived among us in a poor and mean condition, was reviled, inſulted, ſcourged, ſuffered every indignity unrelenting malice could invent, and was at laſt nailed to the accurſed tree, where by a ſhameful and wretched death, he finiſhed his ſorrows and his life together.

Behold with the eye of faith the Lord of life and glory proſtrate on the earth—groaning beneath an intolerable preſſure of ſorrows, that wrung blood inſtead of ſweat from every pore of his ſacred body. What muſt be his ſenſations, that could dictate ſo melting a complaint—"My ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful, even "unto death." See his amiable and benevolent

nevolent temples cruelly torn and mangled by a crown of thorns—they ſpit upon him—they buffet him with the palms of their hands! But, Oh! what heart can conceive—what tongue can utter the cataſtrophe? With remorſeleſs barbarity they drag him upon the earth like a felon, an execrable miſcreant, even to the foot of the croſs. What, ſhall thoſe bleſſed hands which were never lifted up but in miracles of mercy and love; thoſe feet that inceſſantly went about doing good; ſhall thoſe inſtruments of ineffable benevolence be pierced through with rugged nails? Yes! they have crucified him—the iron is entered even into his ſoul—his body writhes with agonizing pain—hear the deſponding lamentation his miſeries have extorted—"My GOD! my GOD! why haſt thou "forſaken me?" And will he die to expiate thoſe very injuries, while his laſt gaſp of breath is ſpent in imploring mercy and forgiveneſs for his very murtherers—

SERM. IX.

"Father forgive them, for they know not "what they do!!"

"Weep not for him, ye daughters of Je- "ruſalem; but weep for yourſelves and for "your ſins," which could be expiated by no leſs a ſacrifice. It was by our ſins he was brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth. He was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities, the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes we were healed. He *died*, voluntarily died, that we might live.

And what returns ſhall we make for ſo ineſtimable a benefit? Alas! when we have performed all that the warmeſt gratitude can dictate—offered up every tribute of ſeraphic zeal, we are but unprofitable ſervants; our goodneſs does not—cannot extend unto him. But let us not omit the ſmall returns we *can* make. He hath appointed his poor members, here upon earth, his repreſentatives and receivers.

He

He hath promiſed to regard every act of kindneſs we ſhall render to them, as immediately conferred upon himſelf. "I "was an hungred and ye gave *me* meat; "I was thirſty and ye gave *me* drink; I "was a ſtranger and ye took *me* in; naked "and ye clothed me; ſick and ye viſited "me. Verily, I ſay unto you, inaſmuch "as ye have done it, unto one of the leaſt "of theſe my brethren, ye have done it "unto me." SERM. IX.

Now to GOD *the Father, &c.*

SERMON X.

REBELLION AGAINST HEAVEN.

SERMON X.

REBELLION AGAINST HEAVEN.

SERMON X.

Why do the Heathen ſo furiouſly rage together? and why do the people imagine a vain thing?

The Kings of the Earth ſtand up, and the Rulers take counſel together, againſt the Lord, and againſt his anointed.

Pſalm ii. 1, 2.

SERM. X.

WHEN we caſt our eyes back on the hiſtory of David, and reflect on the difficulties he was obliged to encounter, before he entered into the poſſeſſion of that kingdom, which GOD had been pleaſed to promiſe him:—When we conſider, that all the enemies of Iſrael, as well as his own perſonal adverſaries, united in one general conſpiracy againſt him;—that Abner,

SERM. X.

Abner, and the whole faction of *Saul*, ſupported the pretenſions of his rival;—that the Jebuſites vigorouſly oppoſed his entry into Jeruſalem;—that afterwards the Moabites, the Syrians, and Iduméans, took up arms againſt him:—ſome idea of the *furious rage*, alluded to in the text, is preſent to our minds.

As we advance in the hiſtory of this once obſcure and ſimple ſhepherd, thus hunted like a partridge on the mountains, it muſt fill us with aſtoniſhment to ſee him, notwithſtanding their obſtinate reſiſtance, at length peaceably eſtabliſhed on the mighty thrones of Iſrael and of Judah.

For while, on the one hand, Iſhboſheth and Abner were miſerably cut off, the Jebuſites put to flight, and the Philiſtines miraculouſly defeated; on the other, the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the reſt of the neighbouring people were reduced to a ſtate of ſervitude: and, in ſhort, the Divine Promiſes were, in the minuteſt article, fulfilled. Whoever, I ſay, reflects

on

on theſe promiſes to David, this univerſal oppoſition *to*, and final accompliſhment *of* them, muſt perceive the utmoſt reaſon to conclude, that the whole pſalm was compoſed as an eternal memorial of thoſe wonders which GOD had wrought in his favour.

And yet, that it is not to be reſtrained to the hiſtory of David *only*, is evident from hence;—becauſe the Supreme Being is therein repeatedly calling the perſon to whom he addreſſes himſelf, *his ſon*; he conſtitutes him a *prince*, *prophet*, and *prieſt*, inveſts him with his own Omnipotence, aſſigns him the whole world for his inheritance, and commands all people, nations, and languages to do homage to him, (for *kiſſing* any one was the token of fealty and ſubmiſſion in thoſe eaſtern countries) to fear and to believe in him. There high privileges, ſtrictly ſpeaking, could never belong to David, or to any mere creature whatſoever; but only to him—to whom, in other parts of Scripture, they are

SERM. X. are expreſſly attributed—namely, our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, the true and only begotten Son of GOD.

Accordingly, in the fourth chapter of the Acts, there is ſo evident an application of the words to our Bleſſed Redeemer, JESUS CHRIST, as muſt diveſt us of all doubt as to the propriety of referring them to him, and render every other proof unneceſſary. Peter and John having performed a moſt ſtupendous miracle, were apprehended as malefactors, and carried before the Rulers of the Jews, who ſentenced them to impriſonment. But being at length releaſed, and permitted to return to their own company, they reported all that the Chief Prieſts and Elders had ſaid unto them. Whereupon we are informed at the twenty-fourth verſe, that "when "they heard that, they lift up their voice, "to GOD, with one accord, and ſaid, "Lord thou art GOD, who haſt made "Heaven and Earth:—who by the mouth "of thy ſervant David haſt ſaid; *why did*

"*the*

SERM. X.

"*the* Heathen rage and the people imagine "vain things! The Kings of the earth "ſtood up, and the Rulers were ga- "thered together againſt the Lord and "againſt his anointed, or CHRIST. For "of a truth againſt thy holy Child "JESUS, both Herod and Pontius Pi- "late, with the Gentiles, were gathered "together."

It appears then that this Pſalm principally, and in the ſublimeſt ſenſe, relates to our Bleſſed Redeemer, and to the Royal Prophet in a limited ſenſe only, or but as the Type or Repreſentative of his illuſtrious deſcendant. Permit me therefore to beſpeak your attention, while I examine what it prophetically advances with reſpect to him: which is,

Firſt, that *the Kings of the earth ſhould ſtand up, and the Rulers take counſel together againſt the Lord and againſt his Anointed.*

SERM. X.

And ſecondly, that their rebellion, and oppoſition, as it was without the leaſt appearance of reaſon or juſtice, will be without any effect whatſoever: (except perhaps their own confuſion, implied in the queſtions;—"*Why* do the Heathen ſo "furiouſly rage together? And why do "the people imagine a vain thing?"—a thing they ſhall never be able to compaſs.

When we contemplate the life of that adorable Saviour, who endured ſuch contradiction of ſinners againſt himſelf, the propriety of referring this prophecy to Him, muſt be obvious to every one.

Yes! great as the words in their moſt extenſive import can ſuggeſt, was that oppoſition which the Lord of Life met with from all ranks and degrees of the Jewiſh and Heathen people, at the firſt publication of the Goſpel, when *the Kings of the earth*—the Roman Govenors in Judea, Herod and Pontius Pilate *ſtood up*—entered into a ſolemn combination,

SERM. X.

bination, and *the Rulers* of the Jews formally aſſembled in their Sanhedrim, and there *took counſel together*, if poſſible, to fruſtrate the divine intentions of effecting the Redemption of Mankind by JESUS CHRIST that great anointed one.

I would to GOD, the completion of the Prophecy belonged to that age and country only! But have we not too much reaſon to ſuſpect, that it may be extended to the conduct of thoſe perſons of irreligious, libertine and anti-chriſtian principles, who even now ſtand up, and continue the ſame vain oppoſition? Who offer no leſs indignity to the Son of GOD, than their Jewiſh and Heathen predeceſſors did of old, and continually ſhoot out their arrows againſt him, even bitter words. *Taking counſel together* how they may repreſent the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith they are ſanctified, as a vain or unholy thing, crucifying Chriſt to themſelves afreſh, and as it were putting him to open ſhame by their apoſtacy and diſ-

SERM X.

obedience. Thoſe, who in this equally adulterous and ſinful generation, are not only ſecretly aſhamed of CHRIST and his words, but continually take occaſion by their writings and converſation, to reject, and even ridicule the doctrines of the Goſpel, and the venerable myſteries of our moſt holy religion.

This flagitious purpoſe is not confined to a few of the *lower* ſet of the people, but is cheriſhed in the boſoms, and countenanced by the practices of *the Princes and Rulers of the Earth*—the great vulgar—the honourable, the polite, and the learned; who are much too *conſiderable*, and in their own opinion, too *wiſe* to hearken to the plain and ſimple precepts of the Goſpel, or to regulate their conduct by it; indeed too knowing to want any precepts *at all*, and too proud to bear them even from GOD himſelf.

But were theſe *overt acts* of treaſon againſt the Anointed of GOD leſs frequent than they are, our defection would be but

too

too evident in its conſequences. To be lo- SERM. X.
vers of pleaſure more than lovers of GOD, is the general character of men and women of all ranks, ages, and conditions, at the preſent day.

And is it any wonder, that ſuch characters ſhould endeavour to make their principles, and practices, as conſiſtent as they can? That they ſhould vindictively ſet their faces againſt a religion profeſſedly calculated to ſhew them the danger and fooliſhneſs of their conduct, or that when the terrors of Chriſtianity ſtare them in the face, and check them in their brutiſh purſuits, that they ſhould furiouſly rage together, and take counſel againſt the Anointed of GOD, who has required purity in the very heart and affections? No; infidelity is their only refuge, and when by their examples, writings, or converſation, they can ſeduce man or woman from the faith, they have gained new inſtruments of their pleaſure, and infer impunity to themſelves from the ſtrength of their party.

SERM. X.

Theſe are the men of whom the Apoſtle tells us, weeping, "that they are "enemies of the Croſs of CHRIST: whoſe "end is deſtruction, whoſe GOD is their "belly, and whoſe Glory is their ſhame, "who mind earthly things, and having "ſeared their Conſcience with a hot iron" are at preſent proof againſt all the ſtings of holy admonition. But a time may come—oh, thou much injured Redeemer avert the impending judgments! a time may come, when plague, peſtilence, famine, and the ſword, may effectually plead the cauſe of him that ſent them, and the Angel of wrath, riſing with deſolation on his wings, may ſcatter at once conviction and death through our devoted country. Apoſtates as we are from GOD and goodneſs, our diſloyalty, irreligion, adulteries, and abominable uncleanneſs, muſt, without ſpeedy Reformation, expoſe us to the curſe of Omnipotence.

Theſe have been the principles and practices (I repeat it) not of the lower ſet

of

SERM. X.

of the people only, whoſe ignorance might have rendered them in ſome degree objects of pity; but of perſons, who, actuated by a ſpirit directly the reverſe of the Apoſtle's, ſeem *determined to know every thing among us ſave* JESUS CHRIST *and him crucified.* So that although to affirm the text to be an expreſs prediction of the *preſent* times, as well as of thoſe when CHRIST was manifeſt in the fleſh, and died upon the Croſs, might be cenſured for raſhneſs; yet to prove it altogether as applicable to them, as it could have been if intended as a direct and poſitive prophecy, is indeed a *melancholy*, but, you ſee, by no means a *difficult* undertaking. Surely this people hath a revolting and rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone, they have forſaken the GOD that preſerved them, and lightly eſteemed the Rock of their Salvation.

I proceed therefore to what was in the ſecond place to be conſidered;—That

SERM. X.

this rebellion againſt the Goſpel, and oppoſition to the counſels of GOD, as they commenced without the leaſt ſhadow of reaſon, muſt terminate without any *effect* whatſoever; as implied in the queſtions, "*Why* do the Hea-"then ſo furiouſly rage together? And "why do the people imagine a vain "thing?"

Whether the prevailing infidelity were the latent cauſe of the immoral lives of its profeſſors, or whether, on the contrary, their reſolution not to amend their lives were the cauſe of their perſiſting in infidelity, was formerly a doubt. But when we reflect that even the firſt principles of religion, are now ſo frequently diſregarded as no eſſential parts of a polite education; and conſequently that young minds being deſtitute of this ſtrongeſt preſervative againſt the tyranny of their paſſions, if they ſhould afterwards hear the evidences of Chriſtianity—neceſſarily bring with them inveterate prejudices againſt it; the true

ſource

ſource of modern infidelity may be eaſily determined. Their unwillingneſs to believe every thing that may oblige them to forſake their boſom vices, muſt be an impregnable bulwark againſt all poſſibility of conviction. For that religion which enjoins no duties but ſuch as are perfectly agreeable to our own natural notions of GOD and his Attributes—that are manifeſtly perfective of the moral virtue, and true happineſs of mankind, muſt recommend itſelf by its own intrinſic excellency to univerſal belief and practice. SERM. X.

Now that the religion of JESUS CHRIST is intirely ſuch an inſtitution, whoſoever impartially looketh into that perfect law of liberty, cannot fail to diſcover. "Whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things "are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, "whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever "things are amiable, whatſoever things are "of good report"—if there be any virtue, if there be any praiſe—Theſe are the things, in which the genuine ſpirit of Chriſtianity prin-

SERM. X.

principally conſiſts. And we may ſafely defy them to produce a ſingle doctrine of the Goſpel that has not ſuch a plain, practical, moral tendency. It is but too obvious, therefore, that our preſent epidemical infidelity is not occaſioned either by want of proper evidence to prove the great truth of religion, or by any repugnancy in its injunctions to uncorrupted reaſon; but merely by ſuch an inordinate love of the world, and its ſinful pleaſures, as having firſt biaſſed the will, raiſes ſo palpable a cloud in the underſtanding, that to thoſe who are inveloped by it, the Sun of Righteouſneſs beams his meridian ſplendor in vain. "The fooliſh heart is darkened — as the "Apoſtle expreſſes it—and the God of this "world has blinded their minds, leſt the "light of the glorious Goſpel of CHRIST, "who is the image of GOD, ſhould ſhine "unto them." Perpetual wiſhes to diſbelieve, GOD will at length puniſh with ſucceſs: and foraſmuch as they chuſe not to believe the truth, "but have pleaſure in

" unrighteouſneſs, for this cauſe GOD will " ſend them a ſtrong deluſion," or invincible infatuation. SERM. X.

But this oppoſition to the Goſpel is, if poſſible, more *vain and ineffectual*, than it is unreaſonable. The ſucceſs of the moſt ſubtile deiſtical and free-thinking writers hitherto, has proved to the ſatisfaction of all capable examiners, that they *imagined a vain thing*. The ſounding braſs and tinkling cymbal of their united wit and wiſdom, like the laugh of an idiot, have ſerved only to convince us, that men maybe very merry and very miſerable, conceited and fooliſh, at one and the ſame time. Some converts indeed it is to be lamented that they have always made—themſelves, and men like themſelves—who were determined to have their portion in this world. But upon their quitting it, the miniſters of the Goſpel, and thoſe who wait about the bed of languiſhing, have generally found their fears get the better of their philoſophy,

and

SERM. X.

and their dying words a refutation of their books.

We may pity their ſucceſſors, but have little reaſon to be afraid of them. Becauſe we know Chriſtianity to be a religion perfectly conſonant to man's innate notions of the eternal and unchangeable laws of GOD and nature—that Omnipotence itſelf hath founded it on the Rock of Ages, and irrevocably promiſed that the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it. After the Lord hath ſo ſolemnly declared, that though "the mountains ſhall depart, and "the hills be removed, yet his kind-"neſs ſhall not depart, neither ſhall the "covenant of this place be removed"—that though heaven and earth ſhall paſs away, yet one iota of his Goſpel ſhall not be changed; after its evidently miraculous eſtabliſhment, and preſervation hitherto; ſhall vain man, who is born like the wild aſs's colt, weak man, who is cruſhed before the moth, indulge a hope of fruſtrating the divine intentions, in ſending his

his great anointed one into the world? SERM. X.
" He that dwelleth in Heaven ſhall laugh
" them to ſcorn. The Lord ſhall have
" them in deriſion."

Is it poſſible they ſhould one moment of their lives ſeriouſly meditate on the great and terrible deſtruction of the primitive enemies of the Goſpel, and crucifiers of the Son of GOD—a plain hiſtorical fact—and the total overthrow of their mighty city and kingdom; without knowing and confeſſing that " there is no wiſdom, nor " underſtanding, nor counſel againſt the " Lord?" without crying out in the fulleſt conviction of their reaſon—" O GOD, no " weapon that is formed againſt thee ſhall " proſper, and every tongue that ſhall riſe " againſt thee in judgment thou ſhalt con- " demn."

Having thus gone through with the examination of this prophecy, which is evidently of the number of thoſe predictions, that may be extended to more than a ſingle event; and to one com-

pletion

SERM. X.

pletion of which, I fear, I am not miſtaken in ſuppoſing the preſent degenerate times to advance a claim: I ſhall take leave, by way of application, to addreſs myſelf to three ſorts of perſons—

The Faithful,
The Wavering,
and
The Unbeliever.

To the Faithful, I would addreſs myſelf in order to enforce on them a reſolute perſeverance, and to inculcate the indiſpenſable neceſſity of acting conſiſtently with their belief—walking worthy of that holy vocation wherewith they are called.

Conſider ſeriouſly, my brethren, the vaſt and inexcuſable aggravation of ſin under the Goſpel.—That if you ſhould at laſt deſert the banner of the great Captain of your Salvation, all your paſt labours in religion are utterly vain. Nor is this all. Your former ſenſe and conviction of the truth;

truth, will ſerve to make your fall from it the more heavy, to diveſt you of every excuſe for your miſconduct, and while it produces a regret for the happineſs you have forfeited, to perpetuate the miſery that ſucceeds it. Theſe are the words of truth itſelf—If after men have eſcaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worſe with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteouſneſs, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. SERM. X.

You are placed upon an eminence—For the honour of your bleſſed Redeemer, therefore, endeavour to adorn and recommend that holy religion which you profeſs by a ſpotleſs life and converſation.—Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they, won by your exemplary conduct, may be

SERM. X.

be induced, together with you, to glorify the father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

To the Wavering I would addreſs myſelf, if poſſible, to eſtabliſh and confirm them. Theſe, though entered on the road that leadeth to eternal ſalvation, have not yet proceeded far enough. Their ſtate is unſettled, and conſequently attended with danger and diſſatisfaction. To be like Agrippa, only *almoſt* perſuaded to be a Chriſtian, will certainly avail you nothing. He that is not with me—ſays the Saviour of the World—is not both almoſt and altogether ſuch as his Goſpel requires—is againſt me. To be almoſt ſaved is to be utterly ruined and undone. Prayer—effectual fervent prayer—in public and in private, to the fountain of all wiſdom for his grace and aſſiſtance—and a regular and worthy participation of the bleſſed ſacrament and ſearching of the ſcriptures with ſincere reſolution to caſt down your vain imaginations and every thing that exalteth itſelf againſt

tions againſt the knowledge of GOD—Theſe and theſe only can ſtabliſh, ſtrengthen, ſettle you. The head may be *ſanctified*, as well as corrupted by the heart. Readineſs to obey is naturally productive of capacity to believe. "If any man will do his will, "he ſhall certainly know the Chriſtian "doctrine to be of GOD." SERM. X.

Induſtriouſly avoid the ſociety, converſation, and writings of theſe bold advocates of infidelity. "Beware—be always on your "guard—leſt any man ſpoil you through "ſuch philoſophy, and vain deceit, after the "tradition of men, and not after Chriſt, and "ſo there be at length in you an evil heart "of invincible unbelief in departing from "the living GOD." The gracious overtures of the Goſpel, wilfully, and deliberately rejected, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin, but a certain fearful looking for judgement and fiery indignation. Any thing below an eternity of happineſs, is not a ſatisfactory object for a rational ſoul; and this, infidelity, in the *plenitude* of

SERM. X.

its arrogance, has never been able to promiſe. Whenever therefore they endeavour to entice you by their deluſive ſchemes, imagine that you hear the Redeemer tenderly expoſtulating with you, as he did with his apoſtate diſciples at Capernaum—"Will ye alſo go "away?" and bring your minds and ſouls to that wiſe and holy temper which may enable you to anſwer with St. Peter—"Lord "to whom ſhall we go? *Thou*—thou "alone—haſt the words of eternal life. "We believe and are ſure, that thou "art that CHRIST, the ſon of the living "GOD."

And let *all* of us, my brethren, and Fellow-Chriſtians! if we would not have this rebellion againſt the majeſty of Heaven to be regarded as the guilt of the nation—to be expiated only by thoſe plagues of war and bloodſhed, which are already executing vengeance in the earth:—Let us, I conjure you by that love which ye bear to this pleaſant land of our nativity, on all fit occaſions ſhew our juſt reſentment and utter abhorrence

abhorrence of it; looking upon theſe enemies of the Goſpel, of whatever party, as our own perſonal and moſt dangerous enemies—as the worſt of men, of friends, of maſters, and I may add—of ſubjects too. For they that will not render "to GOD the things that are GOD's" only wait for an opportunity to refuſe to render "to Cæſar the things that are Cæſar's." SERM. X.

I am laſtly to addreſs myſelf to the profeſt *unbeliever*, not from any hope of reclaiming ſuch by reaſon and argument, but only to ſet before them the danger and folly of their preſent ſituation. But alas! perſons of this character ſeldom reſort to places of ſacred inſtruction. They are in love with darkneſs, and come not to the light leſt their deeds ſhould be reproved. If, however, there be any ſuch among us, to them my indiſpenſable duty obliges me to addreſs myſelf. Now I ſolemnly appeal to your own ſoul whether your preſent principles are really the re-

SERM. X.

ſult of ſuch a thorough and impartial examination of all the evidences of Chriſtianity, as you think and believe will juſtify your *rejecting* it, in the ſight of that GOD, to whom as *moral* agents, you muſt certainly be one day accountable?

Conſider, brethren, this is not a matter of indifference which is before you. It is your all: the eternal happineſs or miſery of your ſouls is now in queſtion. Here you can chuſe but once; and if you make a *wrong* choice, your fate is irrevocable.

Permit me then to recommend this ſingle reflexion to your ſerious meditation. *Our notions* of things do not in the leaſt affect their eternal and neceſſary nature. It is not in our power to fancy them into exiſtence, or to annihilate them by our doubts. There either *is*, or is *not* a ſtate of everlaſting puniſhment reſerved for "thoſe that are contentious, and do not "obey the truth, whether we will believe "it or not." Now ſuppoſing all our appre-

SERM. X.

apprehenſions of ſuch a ſtate to be entirely without foundation; it muſt however be allowed that our endeavours to eſcape it, by obeying the precepts of the Goſpel, cannot be attended with any real diſadvantage.

Whether the promiſes, and threats of ſcripture be of avail, or not, after death, their character and reſult are in conformity with our well-being hereafter a mere moral interpretation. Thoſe who do well are happy inwardly, and bear outward marks alſo of high diſtinction. Let us therefore remember that the Goſpel Law has a preſent honour, and recompence, and that thoſe whom GOD ſhall call righteous doers, will reap on earth a ſample of thoſe fruits, which in Heaven ſhall be ever flouriſhing and perfect.

SERMON XI.

PLEASURE;

OR,

THE PRODIGAL SON.

SERMON XI.

PLEASURE;

OR,

THE PRODIGAL SON.

SERMON XI.

And when he came to himſelf, he ſaid, how many hired ſervants of my Father's have bread enough, and to ſpare, and I periſh with hunger!——

Luke xv. 17.

SERM. XI.

THAT all things neceſſary to ſalvation are contained in the ſacred ſcripture, was the diſtinguiſhing tenet—the chief corner ſtone, of that glorious fabric of reformation, which muſt immortaliſe the primitive aſſertors of religious liberty. All that "is profitable for doctrine, for re-"proof, for correction, for inſtruction in "righteouſneſs, that the man of GOD may "be *perfect*, thoroughly furniſhed, unto all "good works,"—they inſiſted, and demon-

ſtrated

SERM. X.

ſtrated, was to be found in the writings of the Old and New Teſtament. And that as there is hardly a poſſible inſtance of *virtue*, of which a ſhining example may not be produced in the *hiſtorical* parts; ſo neither is there a ſtate of ſin, into which a reaſonable creature may, by the abuſe of free agency be degraded, of which we have not an affecting deſcription, and at the ſame time, an efficacious remedy, in the *didactic*, or preceptive.

It has indeed been aſſerted, by ſome who have attempted an eſtimate of the principles and manners of the times, that there is at the preſent day a *peculiarity* in our moral ſtate, ariſing from our univerſal paſſion for PLEASURE, which is not to be parallel'd either in ſacred or civil Hiſtory. But perhaps the *parable*, of which my text is a part, had it been preſent to their minds, and attentively conſidered, would have been admitted as adequately deſcriptive of that deplorable frenzy, which ſo evidently

actuates

actuates the majority of thoſe, who ſtill inconſiſtently profeſs and call themſelves Chriſtians. In one word, we are a nation of *prodigal ſons*. And I would to GOD it were as eaſy to prevail on ſuch Prodigals to *ariſe* and return to their heavenly father, by ſincere repentance and amendment of life, as it is to demonſtrate the high and indiſpenſable neceſſity of their doing it. SERM. XI.

But whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, it is now ſo plainly the duty of the Chriſtian moraliſt to take up the parable and ſay, "this day is this ſcripture fulfilled in your ears;"—that I ſhall, without any further preface or apology, enter into the examination of it. And though it be the neceſſary tendency of ſenſual pleaſures to extinguiſh the grace of GOD, and render us impatient of the wholeſome word of admonition; I ſhall venture to indulge my hopes, that there will be found enough of that divine principle among the preſent congregation, at leaſt, to bring the parable home to our own

boſoms

SERM. XI.

boſoms, and teach us to apply both the judgement and the mercy to ourſelves. Amen, O GOD, for JESUS CHRIST's Sake!

That our young people are, at the preſent day, permitted to have the rank of men and women too ſoon—to launch their frail bark on the boiſterous ocean of life, before they can poſſibly be ſuppoſed to have acquired either experience for their chart, or prudence for their helm! is ſo common a compliaint, ſo epidemical an error, that we ſee thouſands every day making ſhipwreck of their fame, their fortune and their health, without diſcovering any emotions of ſurpriſe, nay almoſt without regret. An irreconcileable averſion to all government and reſtraint—a deſire of being FREE, as it is called, and maſters of their own conduct—which the youth of former generations never thought on but with fear and trembling, (ſo that the loſs of a parent was always regarded as the moſt irretrievable misfortune)—this early impa-

impatience of *authority* is the firſt ſtriking feature in the character of the preſent times. And this too is the great and pregnant ſource of ſorrow and diſhonour with which the Parable before us commences. "A CERTAIN man (ſays our "divine teacher) had two ſons, and the "YOUNGER of them ſaid to his father, "Father give me the portion of goods that "falleth to me. And he divided unto them "his living." Having thus rendered themſelves independent, their next ſtep is to get as far even from the *obſervation* of their ſuperior as they can. *Baniſhment* itſelf, formerly the ſubject of ſo many pathetic lamentations, is now ſcarce ſo horrible to the modern votaries of pleaſure as the idea of being condemned to ſpend a whole domeſtic day in their own houſes. To ſtay at home, when there is any public amuſement to be enjoyed abroad, is the cauſe of perpetual murmurings, dejection and diſguſt, and family employments are regarded as the drudgery of life.

Accord

SERM. XI.

Accordingly "not many days after, the "younger Son gathered all together, and "took his journey into a far country." And for what purpoſe? the parable tells us in a very *few* but thoſe indeed very emphatical terms,—that he might abuſe his liberty, "*waſte his ſubſtance with riotous living*," and plunge himſelf over head and ears in every ſpecies of diſſipation, gaiety and ſenſual indulgence. The numbers of all ranks, ſexes, degrees and conditions who inceſſantly croud the roads of this great metropolis, particularly on the Lord's-day, "*gathering all together*," perhaps the earnings of a whole week, on the ſame univerſal errand—*to waſte it in riotous living*; are as much beyond computation as they are beyond the example of former times.

Their *heavenly father's houſe*, even the ſervant and apprentice can now hardly be prevailed on to brook, during the ſeaſon of public devotion; or, if compelled by the maſter's authority to reſort to it in the *morning*, it is but too evident from their inattention,

SERM. XII.

inattention, and yawning impatience, that their whole hearts and affections are engaged by the projected diſſipations of the afternoon. And how ſhall we hope for a reformation of theſe enormities, while they are continually countenanced by the conduct of their maſters and miſtreſſes as *they* are by the examples of *their* ſuperiors, whoſe whole lives are in many inſtances but one uninterrupted carnival of tumultuous pleaſure, and nauſeous ſenſuality? *Seriouſneſs* the parent of true wiſdom, and *ſolitude* the nurſe of it, they precipitately fly from as from the face of a ſerpent. And there is hardly any ſpecies of diverſion unacceptable, any ſcurrility offenſive—any filthy jeſting and talking inconvenient, provided it be loud enough to drown the remonſtrances of conſcience, and long enough to rid them of that inſufferable burthen, their time. And as the ſevereſt penance that can be enjoined, would be to "commune with "their own hearts, and be ſtill;" ſo no converſation is unwelcome; unleſs the neceſſity

SERM. XI.

neceſſity of Religion, the vanity of worldly purſuits, or the glories of Heaven ſhould happen to be the topics. And "even "as they do not like to retain GOD in their "knowledge (as the Apoſtle ſpeaks) ſo "he ſeems to have given them over to a "*reprobate* mind, to work all uncleanneſs "with greedineſs. For it is a ſhame "even to ſpeak of thoſe things which are "done by many among us, in their mid-"night ſacrifices to pleaſure." In one word, it is grown the univerſal ſtudy "to put far away the evil day" of *Reflexion*, that they may, without check or interruption, "lie upon beds of ivory, and "ſtretch themſelves upon their couches, "and eat the lambs out of the flock, "and the calves out of the midſt of the "ſtall, chaunting to the ſound of the "viol, and inventing to themſelves in-"ſtruments of muſick," like David—but without one thought of conſecrating them as he did, to that great and benevolent Being, "who openeth his hand, and

filleth

SERM. XI.

"filleth all things living with plenteouſ-
"neſs."

After ſuch a review, can a ſerious mind forbear adopting that pathetic complaint of the prophet—"Ah, ſinful na-
"tion, a people laden with iniquity, they
"*have forſaken the* LORD, and are en-
"tirely alienated from his worſhip and ſer-
"vice! yes, from the loweſt to the high-
"eſt—from the ſole of the foot unto
"the head, there is no moral ſoundneſs,
"but wounds, and bruiſes, and putrifying
"ſores."

There was a time when the ſimplicity of our forefathers was ſuch, that the profeſſed man of pleaſure was a character of reproach among us; and he was even compelled to take his journey into a far country, for want of convenient opportunities to gratify his voluptuouſneſs at home. But ſince the frequency of foreign travel; ſince foreign manners, and foreign diverſions have been inſenſibly imported; and places of public entertain-

SERM. XI.

ment are become ſo numerous, eſpecially in the metropolis, that there is not a day in the week or hardly an hour in the day, that is deſtitute of it's diverſion, or of repeated invitations to the public to partake of it, even the remoteſt villages in the kingdom are almoſt depopulated by the natives inceſſantly crouding to this great mart of luxury.

If there be any foundation of reaſon in the aſſertion, that a land of levity is a land of guilt, then muſt it with ſorrow be confeſſed, ſince it cannot with truth be denied, that we are perhaps one of the moſt guilty nations under Heaven. Here it is—in theſe temples or gardens, conſecrated to the Dæmon of pleaſure——that a ſenſe of religion is firſt weakened and effaced, the influence of principle deſtroyed, and that many, eſpecially of the younger generation, and fairer ſex, have loſt their innocence and virtue, while they imagined they arose only in purſuit of amuſement and happineſs. There was a time, when the royal

royal panegyric was no more than the juſt character of the generality of our amiable country-women. "Who can find a "virtuous woman? for her price is far "above rubies. The heart of her huſband "may ſafely truſt in her, for ſhe will do "him good, and not evil all the days of "her life. Strength and honor are her "clothing, and ſhe ſhall rejoice in time to "come. She openeth her mouth with "wiſdom, and in her tongue is the law of "kindneſs. She looketh well to the ways "of her houſehold, and eateth not the "bread of idleneſs. Her children riſe up, "and call her bleſſed; her huſband alſo— "and he praiſeth her: many daughters "have done virtuouſly, but thou excelleſt "them all. Favor is deceitful and beauty "vain, but a woman that feareth the "LORD, ſhe ſhall be praiſed." But where are thoſe among us, who even *deſire* praiſe for ſuch humble, domeſtic qualifications? The public haunts of men are now the chief ſphere of female glory and

SERM. XI.

SERM XI.

ambition. 'Tis the acknowledged aim of their *education*, rather to qualify them to be ſtriking figures abroad, than gentle, amiable friends at home.

There was a time when our chaſtity was almoſt proverbial; and conjugal infidelity, even in a ſingle inſtance, eſpecially among the great and noble, was regarded as a reproach to the whole nation:—female innocence ſilently retired into corners, covered with the bluſh of confuſion for a falling ſiſter; lamenting that the world had reaſon to admit a *poſſibility* for a wife to violate her matrimonial oath. But now ſince the moſt unreſerved familiarity is become the teſt of good-breeding, and modeſty and retiring delicacy, which GOD and Nature inſtituted for the ſecurity of Virtue, is voted ridiculous—ſince unbluſhing forwardneſs is the politeneſs of woman, and an open profeſſion of incontinency and irreligion, the wit and wiſdom of man;—our public aſſemblies too often ſupply the moſt convenient opportunities for fulfilling every

every evil inclination. Now, therefore, ſeduction, adultery, detection and divorce, are common occurrences—but let our *enemies* finiſh the horrid contraſt, for I have neither abilities, nor deſire to deſcribe our national degeneracy. SERM. XI.

Can we think on this, without applying the prophet's ſacred dirge over that ancient, profligate city of TYRE, to our own equally infatuated metropolis?

"Is this your joyous city, whoſe anti-
"quity is of days remote? The crowning
"city, whoſe merchants were as princes,
"and her traffickers the honourable of the
"earth? whoſe revenue was the harveſt of
"rivers? And her exchange the mart of
"nations! who ſat as a queen, ſtretched
"out her hand over the ſeas, and ſhook the
"kingdoms. But ſhe is fallen! ſhe is
"fallen! Heaven has ſtained the pride of
"all her glory."

If, like her, we obſtinately perſiſt in our deſtructive diſſipation, and, inſtead of bewailing our national ſin, SING as

SERM. XI.

an harlot, to take the harp, to make ſweet melody, to turn to our hire and commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the World, upon the face of the earth, what can we expect, but like her to become deſolate?—to hear thoſe, who are now ſo unceaſingly and unſeaſonably merry-hearted, ſighing in vain, and the mirth of the tabret ceaſe — becauſe the city of confuſion is broken down.

Is it poſſible to treat this ſubject with too much ſerioufneſs and ſeverity? Remember thoſe awful words—"She that liveth "in *pleaſure*, is dead while ſhe liveth." Yes; univerſal irreligion is ſo neceſſarily the conſequence of a diſſipated courſe of life, that the Prophet having denounced an alarming *woe* againſt thoſe, who count themſelves unhappy unleſs they have the harp and the viol, the tabret and the pipe, in their perpetual feaſts; immediately aſſigns this reaſon for it—"they regard not "the work of the Lord, neither conſider "the operation of his hands." Therefore,

(he

SERM. XI.

(he proceeds) "hell hath enlarged herſelf, "and opened her mouth without meaſure, "and their glory, and their aſſembly, and "their pomp, and he that rejoiceth ſhall "deſcend into it."

Pleaſure is, in ſome ſort, more pernicious than vice itſelf. *That* has naturally ſo much loathſomeneſs and horror in it, as to deter every ingenuous mind from its embraces. It ſtartles and alarms the conſcience, and puts us upon our guard. But Pleaſure, under the colour of being innocent and palatable, tempts us to the repeated draught, 'till, like an opiate, it ſtupefies and beſots the ſoul;—lulls the conſcience aſleep; and then vice, loſing it's native horror, imperceptibly inſinuates itſelf—becomes familiar,—is indulged and careſſed as the ſource of happineſs; 'till thoſe fatal hours arrive, when it biteth like a ſerpent and ſtingeth like an adder. Then it is—when the languid, trembling body, unable to ſupport the drudgery of diſſipation any longer, and therefore condemned to

SERM. XI.

ſolitude and pain—then it is, that the ſoul terrified—goaded by ſcorpion ſtings, flies to *Infidelity*, as the only aſylum from diſtraction and deſpair.

Good GOD! what a ſituation is this? Here indeed, they reſemble the poor Prodigal in the Parable, in the moſt affecting ſenſe of the words. *They have ſpent all.* Yes! their innocence, their peace of mind, their health, perhaps, their fortune, their confidence in GOD, their hopes in a crucified Redeemer, and their reverſion of an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of Heaven—all, all is for ever ſquandered away. Now commences the *mighty famine* of the ſoul—That ſpiritual want and neceſſity, from the direction of divine Grace, for the endurance of which but one ſleepleſs night, an age of diſſipation would be a mean and an inadequate recompence.

Ah, how bitterly do they now lament that ill-ſtarred hour, when deluded by a ſpecious ſhew of happineſs, or enticed by the example of a giddy multitude, they made

made a covenant with voluptuouſneſs, and ſaid to Pleaſure, be thou my good! when they went and *joined themſelves to a citizen of that country*—ſome profeſſed *maſter*, or *miſtreſs of Arts*, in the ſcience of ſenſuality. And what, what, at laſt, was the envied, honourable employment which he aſſigned them? *He ſent them into his fields to feed ſwine.* Their moral freedom then was totally loſt, and they are degraded to the abject condition of ſervants or bondmen. In religion and virtue alone conſiſts the liberty of a rational creature, and every deviation from them, though it lead to licentiouſneſs, ends in abject ſlavery. He that is once entangled in a habit of vice or folly, is no longer his own maſter; his reaſon is dethroned, and his tyrannic *luſts* hurry him whitherſoever they will. Theſe are the ſwine which he is condemned to feed—his own brutal appetites. His body is but the ſtye, where the unclean beaſt wallows in all the filth of ſenſuality, and his ſoul—his immortal ſoul is ſent on vile

SERM. XI.

errands

SERM. XI.

errands to drudge, and cater for her indulgence.

But can that be the chief pleaſure of a *man* which the brutes enjoy, in common with—perhaps, in a manner ſuperior, to us? Was a ſelf-conſcious, almoſt angelic being created only to eat and drink, and to riſe up to play? If ſo, we ſhould certainly find perfect ſatisfaction, and content in them. But this never was the caſe, even with the most degraded ſenſualiſt. He is ſick—tired—fatigued—diſguſted with the pleaſures of yeſterday; but yet, in ſpite of experience, depends upon ſatisfaction to-day. He is once more diſappointed, and mourns. The engagements of to-morrow promiſe to fill up his utmoſt expectation; again he finds himſelf compelled to "ſay of laughter it is mad, "and of mirth, what doeth it?" He ſeeks in his heart to give himſelf unto wine—gathers unto himſelf men-ſingers and women-ſingers, and the delights of the ſons of men, as muſical inſtruments,

and thoſe of all ſorts; whatſoever his eye deſireth, he keeps not from it, he withholds not his heart from any joy, but ſtill lies down ſpiritleſs and dejected, exclaiming, "all is vanity and vexation of "ſpirit!" And while the *ſpiritual* man has diſcovered a ſecret—to rejoice in tribulation; he finds himſelf condemned to ſorrow in delight. "*Fain would he have* "*filled his belly with the huſks that the ſwine* "*did eat; and no man gave unto him.*" No; it is impoſſible that any mere ſublunary object ſhould ever fill up the vaſt capacity of an immortal ſoul. "Whatſoever is in the "world, is either the luſt of the fleſh, the "luſt of the eye, or the pride of life," and we may as reaſonably expect to make a meal upon the air, to heal a wounded conſcience by applying a plaiſter, or a jaundiced eye by a diſcourſe on light and colours, as to ſatisfy the human mind by theſe *huſks* that the ſwine did eat—which are ſuited only to the animal part of our Natures. A time will come when every ſoul of man will

SERM. XI.

SERM. XI.

will feel and confeſs, that ſpiritual things are the proper food of the Soul; the Bread of Life our only ſuſtaining nouriſhment, and the duties of rational Religion, all that can ſatisfy a being, thirſting after immortality. But theſe alas! *no man gave unto him.* No; they were no where to be found in the ſplendid ſcenes of diſſipation. Stung to the heart with diſappointment, his famiſhed Soul groaning with anguiſh, and his fevered Body caſt on the ſolitary bed of ſickneſs, *he comes to himſelf* at laſt. He reflects on the heartfelt happineſs of the Righteous, and envies the meaneſt Chriſtian upon earth, whoſe confidence in GOD fills him with ſatisfaction, even in the pooreſt and meaneſt condition of life—whoſe chief pleaſure it has been—whoſe meat and drink it is to do the will of Him that ſent him. *How many hired ſervants of my heavenly Father have bread enough and to ſpare, while I periſh with hunger.* "Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, behold my "ſervants ſhall eat, but ye ſhall be hungry,

" behold my ſervants ſhall drink, but ye " ſhall be thirſty; behold my ſervants ſhall " rejoice, but ye ſhall be aſhamed; they " ſhall ſing for joy of heart, but ye ſhall " cry for ſorrow, and howl for vexation " of ſpirit."

SERM. XI.

While the eternal whirl of vanity deafened my ears, and blinded my eyes, I thought and ſpoke of theſe with ridicule and contempt. I heard not the ſoft whiſpers of Conſcience; I read not the ſtrong demands of Reaſon, though written with a ſun-beam on my own heart. I now read, I hear, and I tremble. I tremble at that in which I once triumphed, I bluſh at that of which I was once ſo proud, regarding it as the only important buſineſs of life. How do I now envy thoſe whom I ſo long deſpiſed? O Pleaſure! Pleaſure! thou haſt undone me. I cultivated Thee as a ſubſtantial Good, but have only ſown the wind, and reaped the whirlwind. What art thou, ſpecious deluſion! but the death of reaſon, the grave of real joy, and the

SERM. XI.

the charnel-houſe of morality. Man, deſperate man, the firſt hour he ſets up for himſelf, and impatient of controul, quits the Houſe and Authority of his heavenly Father, in the very moment of liberty, is the greateſt of ſlaves. How ſhackled and bound, how harraſſed and ſtarved, have I been (muſt he ſay) in the midſt of my riots! what a famine of true delight and ſatisfaction! I have ſlept on a precipice, and dreamed I was in Heaven; if I had then fallen—deſpair and diſtraction are in the thought! Bleſſed — for ever bleſſed and adored be the divine Goodneſs, I am now awake, and in my ſenſes. What, O my ſoul! injured, neglected monitor—what is to be done? *I will ariſe and go to my Father, and will ſay unto him, Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon.*

Happy they, who are convinced before it is too late! Happy they, who ſuffer themſelves to be timely called off from the burning purſuit of Pleaſure, in that fool's paradiſe

paradiſe, into which almoſt the whole nation have ſuffered themſelves to be deluded! SERM. XI.

Some recreation, it muſt be confeſſed, is natural, is perhaps neceſſary, and therefore utterly irreproachable; to *enjoy* which is our wiſdom and our duty. We may *frequently* have recourſe to ſuch ſincere, and manly Pleaſures, as neither dangerouſly raiſe our paſſions, nor depreſs our reaſon; which are neither ſo fine and ſpiritual, that the body can have no participation of them, nor ſo groſs and feculent, that the ſoul ſhould be aſhamed of them. But Nature itſelf has aſſigned their proper bounds; for though they are capable of refreſhing us when weary, and fatigued; yet have they ever been found to weary and fatigue us when refreſhed. If therefore even theſe engage too much of our time and attention; are once ſuffered to become our ſerious buſineſs, the firſt object of our deſires—they will inſenſibly ſteal away our hearts from GOD, who is the chief Good, and make

us

SERM. XI.

us beggars and bankrupts here and hereafter.

The Pleaſures of mere ſenſualiſts not only die in fruition, but are remembered with regret. Thoſe of the ſpiritual man ſurvive the preſent enjoyment, and are as ſweet in retroſpect as in poſſeſſion. Their's leſſen on repetition; *his* increaſe. Their's create and aggravate calamities; his avert many, and alleviate all. Their's haſten death, and increaſe its terrors; *his* owe their perfection to his laſt hour, after having heightened and lengthened all the bleſſings of life. And what a wretch is that happineſs—what an ideot that wiſdom, that can offer no comfort, in the days of darkneſs, and in the hour of death! Their delights, mere *ſenſitives* in the Garden of Life, look gay for a moment, but are barren—ſhrink at the touch of Wiſdom, and fade and wither in the winter of Adverſity. His are ever green, that like "the Tree of Life, bear twelve manner of "fruits, and the leaves of the Tree are for "the

fountains of Heaven, and are rooted on the everlaſting rock—even the rock of Salvation!

If all this has been ten thouſand times demonſtrated by experience, "Wherefore "do ye ſpend your money—waſte your "time and ſpirits—for that which is not "bread? and your labour for that which "ſatisfieth not?" Oh! for the voice of an arch-angel to prevail on us all, high and low, rich and poor, by one mighty effort, to lift up our hearts from earth to Heaven, where true joys are to be found; and return in time to that kind and loving Father, who will even yet have compaſſion on his *poor prodigal Son*—will *meet him, a great way off* in the road of Reformation, embrace him with the arms of his mercy; even rejoicing that his *Son, who was dead, is alive again, was loſt, and is found.*

But if all theſe motives and encouragements are ineffectual to ſtop the voluptuous madman, ſinging, dancing, drinking, dreſ-

SERM. XI.

ſing, and pampering himſelf into a giddy inſenſibility, on the very brink of unfathomable Eternity; we muſt e'en give him up for ever.—"Rejoice, O young "man, in thy youth, and let thy heart "cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and "walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the "ſight of thine eyes; but know thou "*aſſuredly*, that for all theſe things, GOD "will bring thee into Judgment!"

Now to GOD *the Father, &c.*

SERMON XII.

PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENT.

SERMON XII.

Let a Man examine *himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.*

1 Cor. xi. 28.

SERM. XII.

THAT God is a Spirit, and that they that would worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth—namely by an imitation of his own moral perfections; and that the eſſence and efficacy of all Religion to juſtify the ſoul of man, conſiſts in this, and not in external ordinances, which are but the *means* to that end; is intimated in the volume of the Book of Nature, and plainly declared in the Goſpel of Jesus Christ. So contrary to this great univerſal principle was the *practice* of man-

SERM. XII.

kind, that one of the firſt objects of the Redeemer's miſſion was to deliver men from that yoke and burthen of ceremonious obſervances, which human invention had introduced, and to eſtabliſh Religion upon its immutable foundation of perſonal Virtue and everlaſting Righteouſneſs. This ſubſtitution of the means for the end — bodily worſhip for internal purity had prevailed to ſuch a degree, that GOD himſelf, in condeſcenſion to their infirmity—conſidering the hardneſs of their hearts, and the perverſion of their underſtanding, was obliged (as it were by the dictates of his own adorable mercy) to prove the obedience of his peculiar people, the Jews, by giving them ſuch poſitive precepts, as had not, *in themſelves*, any defined moral ſignificancy; their obligation depending principally upon their being poſitively commanded. "I gave "them alſo ſtatutes (ſays the Lord by the "mouth of his Prophet Ezekiel--ſtatutes "that were not good"—were not in their own nature ſpecifically righteouſneſs, but only

SERM. XII.

only relatively good, as beſt ſuited to the capacity of thoſe perſons, whoſe underſtandings were perverted and could not immediately be exalted to an apprehenſion of the more ſublime and ſpiritual parts of Religion. A willing and diligent obſervance of theſe was only acceptable, as it was a proof of an humble, obedient, and ſincere mind. And, although theſe things could not be left undone without impiety and rebellion by thoſe on whom they were enjoined, yet "the *weightier matters* of the Law"—the matters alone indiſpenſably, and eternally, and univerſally neceſſary, were Judgement, Mercy, and Truth.

To theſe, therefore, it was that the Moſt High GOD ſo continually and pathetically exhorted his people by the Prophets, declaring with the moſt awful ſolemnity, on all occaſions, that every merely external compliance, whether Circumciſion, Purification, Sacrifice, Praiſe, or Prayer, in compariſon with a heart and affections dedicated to virtue, was of no value whatever,

SERM. XII.

and, without that, even an abomination in his ſight. "Bring no more vain "oblations (ſays the ſublime Iſaiah) your "incenſe, and your new moons, and your "appointed feaſts my ſoul hateth. When "you ſpread forth your hands, I will hide "mine eyes from you; yea, when you make "many prayers, I will not hear, if your "hands are full of blood"—that is, of diſhoneſty and oppreſſion. "Waſh ye, make "ye clean, put away the evil of your doings "from before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, "learn to do well:" or, as it is ſtill more emphatically expreſſed by the prophet Jeremiah; "O Jeruſalem waſh thine *heart* "from wickedneſs, that thou mayeſt be "ſaved," or accepted before GOD. So the Pſalmiſt; "All my delight is upon the "Saints, or *holy* ones, that are in the earth, "even upon ſuch as excel in virtue. I "will walk in integrity; I have hated the "congregation, or religious aſſemblies of "the wicked. I will waſh mine hands in innocency,

" innocency, O LORD, and ſo will I go " to thine altar." SERM. XII.

The ſame great buſineſs is proſecuted by every ſucceeding Prophet; in withdrawing the people by degrees, as they were able to bear it, from their undue eſteem of ritual and ceremonious performances, and impreſs on their ſouls the true and ſpiritual nature of religion; till, at laſt, in the fulneſs of time, when the human underſtanding had been improved by their inceſſant teaching on the one hand, and the excellent progreſs of philoſophy and polite literature among the nations, on the other; and prepared by both for the reception of truth itſelf:——GOD wholly aboliſhed thoſe rites by the coming of his own Son, whom he ſent forth into the world, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of ſons—that is, be renewed to an imitation of the divine perfections, expecting only to become inheritors of the

happineſs

SERM. XII.

happineſs promiſed by our Heavenly Father, as we ſhall become partakers of his holineſs.

In the Chriſtian Church, therefore, unadulterated by the ſuperſtition of Popery, there are no more than *two* poſitive inſtitutions enjoined as generally neceſſary to ſalvation, which *natural* religion has not ſuggeſted—*Baptiſm* and the SUPPER OF THE LORD. And indeed both theſe are ſo wonderfully ſignificant, and the connexion between the ſign and the thing *ſignified* ſo extremely obvious and evident, that they can hardly be regarded as inſtitutions merely poſitive. By the one, we are admitted into the ſociety of Chriſtians, and made members of the myſtical body of CHRIST; by the other we are confirmed and eſtabliſhed in that ſtate, and receive ſpiritual nouriſhment as members united to the ſame Head, being made partakers of the benefits of the death and paſſion of the crucified Son of GOD.

It is with reſpect to the latter of theſe moſt holy, rational, and neceſſary inſtitutions,

tions, that we are ſo carefully inſtructed by the words of my text. Where it is obſervable,

In the firſt place, that the duty itſelf, of communicating in that Sacrament, is ſuppoſed to be already ſo ſatisfactorily proved to, and univerſally acknowledged by all, who profeſs and call themſelves Chriſtians, that the bleſſed Apoſtle ſeems to think it unneceſſary even to exhort them in expreſs terms, to remember it to be at the peril of their own immortal ſouls, that they perſiſt in turning their backs on it.

But, *ſecondly*, taking it for granted, that whenſoever the communion was celebrated, every one would be eager to partake of it, he is only ſolicitous to remind them of the care and preparation neceſſary to perform it worthily. "Let a *man* examine himſelf, "and ſo let him eat of that bread, and "drink of that cup."

But

SERM. XII.

But what muſt be the ſentiments—how unſpeakable the ſorrow, aſtoniſhment, and indignation of this zealous ſervant of the bleſſed JESUS, could he behold the numbers, who, at the preſent day, with the utmoſt indifference and unconcern, depart from the place of publick worſhip, as it were in habitual contempt of that laſt requeſt of the benevolent Saviour of their ſouls; "Do this in remembrance of me?" What interpretation could even his own charity put upon ſuch impiety, but that the departers are not aſhamed to proclaim to the world that they are, at preſent, either in the courſe of their buſineſs or their pleaſures, ſo retained by diſhoneſt profits and impure indulgences, that they have fixed it as a principle in their ſouls, never to approach the means of ſalvation, till their avarice and their luſts ſhall be fully ſatisfied. No one would be ſurpriſed that the fraudulent tradeſman, the drunkard, or the whoremonger ſhould *refuſe* to receive the ſacrament, but only how

how they could ſo far impoſe upon themſelves as to imagine that the motives of their refuſal could be concealed from their neighbours. No—while they are obſtinately determined to ſin on, as long as any profit can be gotten by it, the very efficacy of the ſacrament is their objection to it: to weaken the force of temptations they cannot but know and feel is to diveſt themſelves of their beſt apology for their preſent purſuits, which conſiſts in ſuppoſing thoſe temptations irreſiſtible, and ſuch as every other man, in their ſituation, muſt and would ſubmit to. And indeed, what temptation can prevail upon thoſe perſons deliberately and habitually to continue in ſin againſt their GOD, or to practice any acts of debauchery, fraud, and injuſtice, who have before their own eyes, the Lamb of GOD himſelf ſhedding his moſt precious blood to redeem them from the dominion and puniſhment of that very ſin, which they are now tempted to commit? What heart can be ſo obdurate—what breaſt ſo ungrateful

SERM. XII.

grateful, as to perſiſt in the commiſſion of *any* ſin, when he (as it were) ſees and hears his dying SAVIOUR, entreating—beſeeching him to avoid that which was the cauſe of his bitter and ignominious death? In matters of civil concern, we always endeavour to remember the inſtructions of a dying friend; and think that nothing more ſacredly obliges us than his laſt and moſt affectionate deſires: but how much more religiouſly muſt we feel ourſelves conſtrained to obſerve thoſe precepts, which we find the lover of our ſouls enjoining us, not only when dying, but, aſtoniſhing conſideration! when actually dying for our ſakes?—dying! on purpoſe to enable us to fulfil them? Now the mean to preſerve theſe impreſſions conſtantly freſh upon our minds is to partake frequently and regularly of thoſe elements which our LORD himſelf has appointed to be received as the moſt proper remembrances of himſelf. When we ſee the bread broken, and the wine poured out; we cannot but recollect how his precious body

SERM. XII.

body was broken on the croſs, and his life's blood poured out for us men; and for our redemption from the univerſal ſlavery of ſin. One great and principal end therefore of the inſtitution of the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper is, by means of outward and viſible ſigns, apt and decent, proper, ſignificant, forcible, and affecting, to imprint on our minds the remembrance of CHRIST's death and paſſion; according to that of the author of my text, "as often "as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, "ye ſhew the LORD's death till he come:" ſo that having frequently before our eyes thoſe affecting inſtances of his unparalleled love; and being continually reminded of the true end and deſign of his ſufferings, we may be the more ſtrongly fortified againſt all temptations that would ſeduce us to ſin againſt ſo ſtupendous a benefactor. Our ſins nailed CHRIST to the croſs; and if we would not crucify him to ourſelves afreſh, this viſible repreſentation of the wrath of GOD

againſt

SERM. XII.

againſt ſinners, in whoſe ſtead he was put to death, is wonderfully adapted to induce us to earneſt and true repentance, and to walk warily in theſe dangerous days; fleeing from thoſe vices, for which we ſee with our own eyes the curſe of GOD to be due.

Such then being the plain and evident tendency of this divine inſtitution;—to ſtop us in the career of ſenſuality, and render us uneaſy and ſelf-condemned in the purſuit of diſhoneſt profits, and diſhonourable pleaſures, it cannot be otherwiſe but that men's indiſpoſition to the holy ſacrament ſhould be in proportion to their attachment to their boſom ſins.—"This, "therefore, is their condemnation, that "light is come into the world"—the effectual means of reformation are before them —"but that they love darkneſs rather than "light, becauſe their deeds are evil. For "every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, "neither cometh to the light leſt his deeds "ſhould be reproved."

SERM. XII.

And how great ſoever may be our grief, when we behold many perſons walking with utter indifference out of the church, regardleſs of every admonition, invitation, and entreaty not to abſtain from the LORD's table, and ſeparate from their brethren, who ſtay behind to feed on the banquet of that moſt heavenly food;—we cannot be ſurpriſed; knowing that the Spirit ſpeaketh expreſsly, that in theſe latter times "ſome ſhall depart from the faith, "having their conſcience ſeared with a hot "iron; lovers of their own ſelves, covetous, "proud, blaſphemers, unthankful, unholy, "incontinent, fierce, deſpiſers of thoſe that "are good, ſtubborn, high-minded, lovers "of pleaſures more than lovers of GOD;" denying, with horrible ingratitude, denying the laſt dying requeſt of the LORD that bought them. But they ſhall proceed no further, without having the motives of their conduct made manifeſt unto all men. For it is concerning ſuch characters that

SERM. XII.

our Apoſtle has, with the moſt awful ſolemnity, preſcribed the indiſpenſable duty of the Miniſters of the Goſpel: "I charge "thee, therefore, before GOD and the "LORD JESUS CHRIST, who ſhall judge "the quick and the dead, at his appearing "in his kingdom; preach the word, be in-"ſtant in ſeaſon, out of ſeaſon; reprove, "rebuke, exhort, *becauſe*, while they pro-"feſs that they know GOD, by their works "they deny him, being abominable and "diſobedient, and unto every good work "reprobate."

If there be any exception to this charge, it muſt be in favour of the ignorant and uninſtructed; who abſtain from the LORD'S Table, not from the love of vice, but the fear of communicating unworthily, and without that preparation of the heart and affections, which, although they are convinced of its neceſſity, they do not perfectly comprehend. They are terrified by that declaration immediately preceding my text; "whoſoever ſhall eat this bread, and drink

SERM. XII.

"drink this cup of the LORD *unworthily* "is guilty of the body and blood of the "LORD; that is of *profaneneſs, in not diſ-* "*cerning the Lord's body*"—not diſtinguiſhing ſo ſolemn an act of religion by a ſuitable apprehenſion of it. But this is evidently not their caſe: on the contrary, they have been hitherto deterred merely by the awfulneſs of their own ideas of it. Equally unconcerned are they, therefore, in the ſubſequent declaration; that "he that "eateth and drinketh unworthily," that is (as St. Paul has himſelf explained it) as if he deſpiſed the church of GOD, and was voluptuouſly eating and drinking at a riotous entertainment in his own houſe—"eateth and drinketh *damnation* to himſelf;" or, as the word is tranſlated in the margin of the bible, a *judgement*—ſome temporal calamity; and that this is his meaning is demonſtrable beyond a doubt, by what he immediately adds; for this cauſe—on account of this profaneneſs "many are "weak and ſickly among you, and many

SERM. XII.

ſleep." As to thoſe humble, ſerious, Chriſtians, who have no ſuch irreverent ſentiments of the ſacrament; neither need they have any fear of the judgements denounced againſt that peculiar ſpecies of unworthineſs. For,—he expreſsly ſays, "if "we would judge ourſelves, we ſhould not "be judged:"—or liable to any of thoſe judgements: for they are, moſt evidently words of encouragement, and merely a kind and loving repetition of the direction in my text; "Let a man examine himſelf, "and ſo let him eat of that bread, and "drink of that cup." Now this ſelf-judgement and examination can only conſiſt of two things—either an enquiry into our habitual religious principles and general practices, whether we are really, and at the bottom of our hearts, ſincere Chriſtians upon rational conviction, or are not; or elſe, an enquiry into the preſent diſpoſition of our minds, whether we be, at *this particular time*, in a devout frame and temper, or not; in one word, whether it be

SERM. XII.

be our wiſh and intention to devote ourſelves henceforth to the ſervice of God, with ſuch a repentance for our paſt ſins as has induced us to form a reſolution of forſaking them for the future; or whether we be ſtill wholly devoted to the world. Both branches of this enquiry are contained in the anſwer to that queſtion in your church catechiſm; what is required of thoſe who come to the LORD's ſupper? To the former the reply is—"to examine themſelves, whether they have a lively faith "of GOD's mercy, through CHRIST, "with a thankful remembrance of his "death"—or—of his dying to redeem us from ſin and eternal miſery: to the latter; to "examine themſelves, whether they "repent them truly of their former ſins, "ſtedfaſtly purpoſing to lead a new life, "and to be in charity with all men."

The firſt enquiry is indeed of infinite importance, but then it is as *eaſy* as it is neceſſary. "Examine yourſelves (ſays "our Apoſtle) whether ye be in the faith;

SERM. XII.

"your own ſelves: know ye not your own "ſelves, that JESUS CHRIST is in you, "except ye be Reprobates?" No man but the *reprobate* therefore is abſolutely deſtitute of the faith. Hence it is that St. John tells us, "the children of GOD are "manifeſt, and the children of the Devil;" it is impoſſible for any man in his ſenſes to miſtake, when he communes with his own heart, to whom he belongs.

The reprobate or children of the Devil are they, who are blaſphemers of their GOD,—malicious mockers and deſpiſers of things ſacred—incorrigible ſabbath-breakers—having no ſenſe of the Majeſty of GOD upon their minds, but habitually profaning that holy and adorable name, by horrible curſing and ſwearing:—if any man live in the practice of *ſecret* fraud in the conduct of his worldly buſineſs, if he thirſt for revenge, and treaſure up malice in his heart—if any man indulge himſelf in the violation of chaſtity, or be abandoned to gluttony and drunkenneſs; in

SERM. XII.

ſhort, if he be determined to have his portion in *this* world, whatever may be his lot in the next—his own conſcience, however diſcouraged, will infallibly whiſper to his ſoul his genuine character. Of ſuch a perſon, there can be no doubt, but that he is as utterly unworthy of, as he is unwilling to approach the table of the LORD: unworthy to join himſelf to any religious Aſſembly whatſoever—unworthy to bear the name and profeſſion of a Chriſtian—unworthy to live, and yet wholly unfit to die—unworthy ſo much as to lift up his eyes towards heaven (the throne of his inſulted Creator, and rejected Redeemer) till a ſoul-felt conviction of his univerſal unworthineſs ſhall compel him to ſmite on his breaſt ſaying, GOD be merciful to me a ſinner! Without this conviction, and its neceſſary conſequence, a total change of his courſe of life, and an effectual reformation of his manners; it is moſt certain, that the holy communion can do nothing to expiate his horrible guilt, "neither remaineth

SERM. XII.

"there any other ſacrifice for his ſins, "but only a certain fearful looking-for "judgement and fiery indignation which "ſhall devour the adverſaries."

But we are perſuaded better things of you, my brethren; that ye are not of them who thus renouncing the Goſpel, both in faith and practice, draw back unto perdition; but of them who believe to the ſalvation of their ſouls.

It is therefore only to the *ſecond* branch of this ſelf-judgement and examination that it may be neceſſary to beſpeak your particular attention. And here it is evident as well from reaſon as from revelation, that if a man, in the general courſe of his life, has made it his ſincere endeavour to obey the commandments of GOD; to paſs his time in the habitual practice of ſobriety, truth, virtue, and honeſty; if he has either been ſo happy as to avoid all great crimes, or at leaſt has truly repented of, by utterly forſaking them; his conſcience only accuſing him of the daily incurſions of human frailty, thoſe frailties which even the

wiſeſt and beſt of men always complain of, but can never wholly avoid;—the deviations of inadvertency—the ſmall ſurpriſes of paſſion, and ſudden temptations of things not of the higheſt importance—the careleſſneſs of an unguarded word, the vanity of an indecent thought—the want of equal warmth in the offices of devotion, confeſſion, praiſe, and prayer, which may be a mere conſtitutional infirmity;—when this is the caſe, an examination into the preſent diſpoſition of his mind, whether it be at that particular time in a devout frame and temper, or juſt then unhappily engroſſed by ſecular cares and concerns, is the principal queſtion which muſt be anſwered by an enquiry into his own conſcience. If there be any difficulty in it, 'tis our mighty conſolation to reflect that the very *deſire* to perfect holineſs in the filial fear of the Lord is to be *ſpiritually-minded*, which (ſays the Apoſtle) is life and peace. So that thoſe pious Chriſtians of melancholy diſpoſitions, who are diſtracted by ſcruples, and overwhelmed by a reverential

SERM. XII.

tial awe of the holy table, can never be in danger of approaching *unworthily*, in the ſcripture ſenſe of the word; for we are expreſsly told, *that* conſiſted in not diſcerning the LORD's body; but in communicating with the ſame careleſsneſs and indifference as if they were ſitting down to an ordinary banquet, wholly unconnected with religion. It is impoſſible that exceſs of reverence ſhould be miſtaken for profanation, to which it is directly contrary.

"Now no man can ſay that JESUS is the "LORD, or aſcribe true glory to him, but "by the Holy Ghoſt. And we have not "received the ſpirit of bondage again to "fear; but we have received the ſpirit of "adoption, whereby we cry *Abba*, Father. "So that the Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs "with our ſpirit, that we are the children of "GOD." And it is for the holy nouriſhment and comforting of the ſincere though imperfect children of GOD, that the eternal Wiſdom hath furniſhed her table, crying by her Miniſters, "Come eat of my "bread,

"bread, and drink of the wine which I "have mingled. Forſake the fooliſh and "live, and go in the way of underſtanding." It is GOD that worketh in them both to *will* and to do of his good pleaſure; and may we not be confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in them will not leave them deſtitute of any neceſſary ſuccours of his grace in their endeavours to obey and glorify him? In the ſincerity of thoſe endeavours conſiſts the genuine ſpirit of devotion. So that they are, in fact, always truly religious, although they may not perhaps be always equally *ſenſible* of it, to their own ſatisfaction. Their lamps, if not always equally *trimmed*, are nevertheleſs always *burning*. The wedding garment of holy preparation is actually upon them, however it may be occaſionally diſordered by the incurſion of inevitable cares, or by the preſſure of infirmity, diffidence, and melancholy.

Upon every ſolemn invitation to the Altar a chief Thing required of us is

to

SERM. XII.

to elevate our affections to the higheſt degree of zeal and earneſtneſs that we can—to reject, for the preſent, all ſecular and worldly thoughts, and to examine more ſtrictly and particularly into the ſtate and diſpoſition of our ſouls, devoting as much time to prayer as our opportunities afford, without anxious ſcruple, or ſuperſtitious ſolicitude. For if even this ſhould by any accident be prevented, men habitually virtuous and honeſt are always in a continual ſtate of general preparation; and may *at all times* as ſafely communicate as it is certain that the irreligious, vicious, and debauched can at no time be rendered worthy to do it by any formal preparation of a few days' devotion. Without immediate effectual repentance and change of life, the communion of the latter is horrible profanation and deteſtable hypocriſy, while that of the former, ſanctified by the general tenor of their principles and practices, will be mercifully accepted as an offering and ſacrifice to GOD for a ſweet-ſmelling ſa-

vor

SERM. XII.

vor—be available for a remiſſion of their paſt ſins, through the ſatisfaction of the beloved JESUS, and enable them to put on the new man, which after GOD is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs.

For as it was denounced to our firſt parents, concerning the forbidden tree, "in "the day that thou eateſt thereof thou "ſhalt ſurely die;" ſo hath the ſame GOD Omnipotent in mercy ordained for the recovery of our ruined nature, that "he that "eateth the fleſh and drinketh the blood of "the Son of Man ſhall live for ever. That "as in Adam all die, even ſo in Chriſt ſhall "all be made alive." *Bleſſed*, therefore, *are they* who conſcientiouſly prepare themſelves to *do* this, as well as all other *his commandments that they may have right to the Tree of Life!* remembering that awful declaration of him who was ſent on purpoſe to ſeek and to ſave thoſe that were loſt—"Ve-"rily, verily, I ſay unto you, except ye eat "the fleſh of the Son of Man, and drink "his blood, ye have no life in you."

SERMON XIII.

THE THINGS WHICH BELONG UNTO OUR PEACE.

FAST FOR THE YEAR 1779.

SERMON XIII.

THE THINGS WHICH BELONG UNTO OUR PEACE.

SERMON XIII.

And when he was come near, he beheld the City, and wept over it,
Saying, if thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

Luke xix. 41 & 42.

SERM. XIII.

WHAT an affecting picture is this of the compaſſion, of the tender mercies, and the ſympathiſing pity, of the Redeemer of the world! Never was the Man of Sorrows, acquainted—familiar with grief, diſplayed in a more endearing attitude;—never was the univerſal Friend of human nature exhibited in ſofter colours than in the ſcene before us!

SERM. XIII.

The bleſſed JESUS, now making his triumphal entry into Jeruſalem, halted a moment at the deſcent of the mount of Olives, in the midſt of the acclamations and hoſannahs of the multitude; when caſting his eyes on that city, once the pride and glory of the whole earth, the venerable ſeat of his anceſtors, Kings, Patriarchs, and Prophets, its approaching *deſolation* ruſhed at once upon his benevolent ſoul. He knew that the meaſure of their iniquities muſt now ſoon be filled up. Their national luxury, abominable pride and horrid impiety—their incurable hardneſs of heart and obſtinate infidelity wanted only the murder of himſelf and of his beloved apoſtles and friends, to render them ripe for the vengeance of GOD. He foreſaw the accompliſhment of it and wept.—He wept not for himſelf, but for them and for their children. And what he thus contemplated in ſilent anguiſh, his tenderneſs induced him preſently afterwards to communicate, that their immediate repentance

and

and reformation, if it were not too late, might yet avert the judgements of GOD, ready to fall on their devoted heads. SERM. XIII.

Some of them pointing to the Temple, and obſerving the magnificence of the ſtructure, and the ineſtimable value of its ornaments; JESUS ſaid unto them, "See "you not all theſe things? Verily, I ſay "unto you, there ſhall not be left here "one ſtone upon another, that ſhall not "be thrown down."

Their fears were alarmed, and immediately ſuggeſted to them an enquiry after the *prognoſticks* or tokens, which ſhould precede this aſtoniſhing diſpenſation:— "Tell us (ſay they) when ſhall theſe "things be? and what *ſign* will there be, "when theſe things ſhall come to paſs?" Their curioſity ſeeming to have a moral and religious tendency, he mercifully anſwers them:—When ye ſhall hear of wars and rumors of wars; when nation ſhall riſe againſt nation, and kingdom againſt king-

SERM. XIII.

dom—when there ſhall be famines and peſtilences and earthquakes in divers places; they ſhould regard *theſe* as the beginnings of their ſorrows. When ye, therefore (he proceeds) ſhall ſee the abomination of deſolation ſpoken of by the prophet Daniel (that is, Jeruſalem beſieged by the Roman army, abominable for their idolatries) then let them, which be in Judea, *flee* into the mountains, for vain would be every thought of *reſiſtance*. For then ſhall be great tribulation, ſuch as was not ſince the beginning of the world.—Or, as it is elſewhere expreſſed—Let them which are in the midſt of Judea, depart out; and let not them, that are in the countries enter thereinto. "They ſhall fall by the edge of the ſword, "and ſhall be led away captive into all na- "tions, and Jeruſalem ſhall be trodden "down. And there ſhall be ſigns in the ſun "and in the moon and in the ſtars; and upon "the earth diſtreſs of nations, with per- "plexity; men's hearts failing them for fear, "and for looking after thoſe things which

"are

"are coming."—For theſe (ſays he) be the days of vengeance!—Words of infinite and alarming importance—the ſeaſon of repentance and mercy would be then paſſed for ever and ever. And ſince they had, to the laſt moment, perſiſted in deſpiſing the riches of the Divine Goodneſs and Forbearance and Long-Suffering; they would find, to their everlaſting confuſion, that their hardneſs and impenitent hearts had only been treaſuring up unto themſelves wrath againſt that day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of GOD. SERM. XIII.

The completion of this prophecy, in the utter deſtruction of their city, name, and nation, is perhaps the moſt illuſtrious, unexceptionable and awakening inſtance of divine vengeance that is recorded in the whole compaſs of ſacred or civil hiſtory. Their calamities were as unparalleled as their crimes, as horrid as their national impiety, as deep as their pride, as ſevere as their malice, and as incurable as their obſtinacy. Their puniſhment is an everlaſting

SERM. XIII.

ing memorial of their ſins, and a warning to all people, nations, and languages not to preſume on the mercy of GOD, without repentance and reformation of life. The mild philanthropiſt never ſaw it, even by anticipation, but the ſorrows of his heart were enlarged, and flowed out into pathetick lamentation:—"O Jeruſalem! Jeru-"ſalem! thou that killeſt the prophets, "and ſtoneſt them, which are ſent unto "thee—meſſengers of good—how often "would I have gathered thy children to-"gether, even as a hen gathereth her "chickens under her wings, and ye would "not! Behold your houſe is left unto you "deſolate." Or, in the words of my text; "O that thou hadſt known, even "thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things "which belong unto thy peace! but now "they are hid from thine eyes."

Which awful ſcripture contains *three* points of doctrine, which come immediately home to our own national circum-

ſtances, and the occaſion of the preſent ſolemnity: SERM. XIII.

Firſt, that the happineſs and ſtability of a people depend on their attention to moral and religious duties. Theſe are the things, which belong unto their peace.

Secondly, that by a timely recurrence to them, through general repentance and reformation, the judgements of GOD may be averted, and the national proſperity reſtored. And in the

Third and laſt place, that we may defer practiſing the things, which belong unto our peace, and which alone can preſerve or reſtore it, till, by a judicial blindneſs, they ſhall be hidden from our eyes, and our obſtinate abuſe of the divine mercy and forbearance ſeal us up to inexorable vengeance.

Could any proof be required of theſe great and intereſting propoſitions; I ſhould beg leave, for the preſent, to refer you,

SERM. XIII.

for conviction—not to any nice and elaborate ſpeculations on the nature of virtue and morality, the harmony of the divine attributes, or the economy of providence—but to mere experience and matter of fact; and particularly to the hiſtory of that diſperſed and ruined people, whom we have been hitherto conſidering. Their ſtory is told in a few words:

When they feared the LORD, and walked in his commandments, then was it well with them: Jeruſalem was in proſperity all the day long; their enemies were at peace; and every man eat the fruit of his labors, in comfort, under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree, from Dan even to Beerſheba.

But when their national manners became corrupt and diſſolute, they were viſited with judgements;—war, peſtilence, and famine exerciſed their fury among them, till they read their ſins in their puniſhment, and *repented*. Their converſion to righteouſ-

neſs

neſs was always followed by the recovery of their political advantages, and reformation and reſtoration went hand in hand. But when they ſunk down into the dregs of impiety and vice, and would no more be awakened from their dream of ſenſuality, by the thunder and lightening of divine warnings; their national glory every moment declined, till from a free and independent people, once renowned above all the reſt of the world, for their warlike exploits, they were degraded to a province to Rome, and held in univerſal contempt by all nations on the face of the earth. And when their moral ſenſe was, at laſt, totally obliterated by the habitual perpetration of vice; their kingdom vaniſhed, as if it had been ſwallowed up by an earthquake, and the poſterity of thoſe great and glorious anceſtors, once the peculiar favorites of GOD, were ſcattered like chaff before the wind, and became as the filth of the world, and the offſcouring of all things.

Now

SERM. XIII.

Now theſe things which happened unto them for examples, are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.—And for this obvious and merciful reaſon—that the hiſtory of their various and wonderful viciſſitudes, from their firſt erection into a people, down to their final exciſion, being recorded and tranſmitted to us, we may, in them, as in the glaſs of Providence (if I may be indulged the expreſſion) diſtinctly ſee all the ſeveral ways and methods of GOD's dealings with great ſtates and kingdoms; and be fully inſtructed in the rules of his raiſing and depreſſing, proſpering or puniſhing them, by the interpoſition of a divine power, almoſt as viſible as their very virtues or vices, that occaſioned it.

The juſtice of his adminiſtration, with reſpect to individuals, may be manifeſted either here or hereafter, as he ſhall think fit; for *their* duration is eternal: and ſhould their ſucceſsful crimes or unmerited afflictions be connived at in this world; the

the ways of GOD to man will be ſufficiently vindicated, when theſe irregularities are ſet right in the next. But as to ſocieties and combinations of men, which are of a ſhorter date, another rule muſt take place;—the juſtice of GOD's adminiſtration with regard to them, muſt be manifeſted either here, or not at all. SERM. XIII.

Having eſtabliſhed this baſis of reaſon, give me leave (ſince all the time that can be allowed to a diſcourſe of this nature is much too little for ſo great and intereſting a ſubject) to wave the general reflexions which the text ſuggeſts, and to come immediately to the ſolemn buſineſs of the day, and the occaſion of the preſent Aſſembly. And if it ſhall appear that our neglect of *the things which belong unto our peace* bears any proportion or ſimilitude to theirs, the wiſdom and piety of appointing this ſeaſon of publick humiliation, faſting, repentance, and prayer, and the infinite, unſpeakable neceſſity, incumbent on all ranks

SERM. XIII.

ranks and orders of men, devoutly to avail themſelves of it, muſt be as evident as the firſt principles of ſelf-love and ſelf-preſervation.

I ſhall now, without fear, or hope of favor, preſent you with a catalogue of our own crying national ſins. And if theſe can neither be diſſembled or denied; the duty of timely, that is, of immediate reformation, *in this our day*, in order to prevent the immediate ruin of ourſelves and kingdom, is founded on the belief of this plain truth;—that GOD is no reſpecter of perſons, but uniform and equal in his diſtributions of juſtice and mercy.

It generally happens that the ſhades in national manners deepen ſo gradually and inſenſibly, that their advances towards univerſal profligacy can ſeldom be aſcertained in their progreſs; and the niceſt obſerver can hardly take upon him to ſay, lo! here, or lo! there, the darkneſs began. There may be, from the crown of the

the head to the ſoal of the foot, no moral ſoundneſs—nothing but wounds and bruiſes and putrifying ſores; yet, till the predominant *cauſe* can be aſcertained, the remedy is uncertain. This, however, is not the caſe with reſpect to ourſelves. It commenced when the writings and converſation of infidel philoſophers againſt the doctrines and duties of revealed religion were, under pretenſe of free-thinking and free-enquiry, publiſhed without fear, and heard without reproach:—when ſuch characters, inſtead of being deteſted for their wickedneſs, were careſſed for their wit. Hence it is, that we have thoſe among us now, in great numbers, who openly attack the Chriſtian inſtitution itſelf—their writings, their converſation, their conduct are all calculated to convince the reſt of the world, that they glory in unbelief:—its holy offices are not barely neglected, its ſacraments refuſed, and its Miniſters degraded, impoveriſhed, and oppreſſed; but

SERM. XIII.

SERM. XIII.

the very word of GOD—the ſacred ſcriptures, when adduced to oppoſe any violent intereſt or inclination of men, are heard without conviction—ſlighted, reviled, traduced, in a manner that exceeds any thing we read of from its Jewiſh or heathen adverſaries, or was ever before ſuffered with impunity, in any Chriſtian country upon the face of the earth.

The ſabbath of the LORD, which had, from the creation down to the preſent day, been univerſally dedicated to religious obſervation, is now become to people of all ranks, a ſeaſon of gaming, riot, and debauchery; or, at beſt, of amuſement and frivolity. Even ſome who are leaſt deficient in their attendance on the great and neceſſary duties of the day, too plainly evince that cuſtom and education, rather than rational knowledge and conviction, are their motives to the little religion which is left to them; becauſe they make no ſcruple of *abſenting* themſelves, whenever the moſt

trifling

trifling avocation ſolicits their regard. An imaginary indiſpoſition, a walk, a ride, a viſit, a dinner, cold or heat, wind or rain, a diſlike of the perſon of their miniſter, in ſhort, any thing, every thing, or *nothing*, will ſerve to ſatisfy men's conſciences, whenever they think fit to trample under foot the laws of GOD and their country by prophaning the ſabbath. Sunday card-playing is not only notoriouſly practiſed, but openly defended. And who ſhall dare reprove them for ſuch inſufferable folly? So obſtinate in licentiouſneſs, ſo principled in habitual irreligion are they, that all the wiſdom of the ſerpent, joined to all the harmleſſneſs of the dove, and both added to all the benevolence of the angel, would not be ſufficient to exempt the reprover from the reſentment of thoſe he was ſolicitous to reform. You know, my brethren, at leaſt the Miniſters of the Goſpel know it to their ſorrow, that the gentleſt admonition

to

SERM. XIII.

to the habitual abſenter from publick worſhip is hardly ever ſuffered with patience—is ſeldom thoroughly pardoned and forgiven. Nay, this is not the worſt; it is grown with men a faſhionable piece of wit to offer the moſt impertinent and fooliſh reaſons for not going to church—that is, for putting themſelves, their children, and ſervants out of the reach of all the ordinary means of ever arriving at the knowledge of the things which *belong unto their peace.*

Could I enumerate the various tribes of hereticks, ſcepticks, infidels, apoſtates, and profeſſed ſcoffers at all religion—could I point to every inſtance of abomination which ſuch characters hourly perpetrate—duellings, ſeductions, adultery, and divorce—could I recite before you the mournful catalogue of ſelf-murderers, who within theſe few years only, have, with ſomething worſe than deviliſh obduracy, preſumption, and inſolence, ruſhed into the

the preſence of their GOD, in and by the very act of offending him;—when you recollect that our highways are, in every quarter, filled with robbers, our public ſtreets with proſtitutes; nay, that our very houſes can hardly be ſecured from the nightly thief and murderer;—when I remind you that almoſt every department of publick offices is filled with daily notorious perjuries, and even our courts of juſtice with falſe witneſſes, and falſe ſwearers; need I aſk, whether we have known, in this our day, the things which belong unto our peace? SERM. XIII.

No; our national offence is rank, it ſmells to heaven. Our too general contempt of religion, and its neceſſary conſequences in the ſhocking profligacy of our national manners, is at open enmity with every attribute of that Being, the blaſting of the breath of whoſe diſpleaſure is able, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to annihilate the univerſe.

SERM. XIII.

But it is in vain to ring out the alarm-bell of ſpiritual judgements to thoſe, who are intoxicated with ſenſuality, and wilfully deaf and blind to the voice of reaſon and the drawings out of the ſword of eternal vengeance. They cannot, however, but have obſerved that fatal contempt of magiſtracy—that general impatience of ſubordination, both at home and abroad, which threaten the very diſſolution of ſociety. Reſiſtance of lawful authority is but the firſt ſtep to national confuſion, bloodſhed, and inevitable diſtreſs. Who but muſt have remarked their dreadful effects among the remoter of our fellow-ſubjects? Every benevolent ſoul, that caſts a look towards our *American* colonies, muſt feel himſelf inclined to take up the lamentation of the text—"Oh! that thou "hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in "this thy day, the things which belong "unto thy peace! but now they are hid-"den from thine eyes." Yes; we may there ſee a moſt extenſive country, where a whole

people, under pretence of ſtruggling for liberty—that is, for an exemption from the laws of equity, gratitude, and reaſon—are reduced to this emphatical ſtate of wretchedneſs;—every man is either the moſt abject ſlave under his brethren, or the moſt inexorable tyrant over them;—with a ſavage deſpotiſm, that would diſgrace the annals of a *Nero*, ſacrificing property, conſcience, liberty and life.

And has not our own immediate *peace* been already deeply wounded by the enormous expences incurred by our attempts to reduce them to a ſenſe of duty? By our domeſtick animoſities, our perſonal hatred, and malicious revilings of each other as to the expediency and lawfulneſs of doing it? but above all, by the tears, that run day and night down the cheeks of the widow and orphan, comfortleſs, ruined, undone by the untimely deaths of our own countrymen, employed in the dangerous and deſperate buſineſs.

SERM. XIII.

But the miſchief is approaching ſtill nearer and nearer to our own doors. Our natural enemies, who have more ſtrength and better counſel for the war, have already, with a treachery and perfidiouſneſs that would infamize a horde of barbarians, availed themſelves of our internal diſſentions, and are, at this moment, meditating the deſolation of our kingdom. Nothing is more common in the economy of Providence, than for one profligate nation to become the inſtruments of GOD's vengeance on another. It was thus the idolatrous Romans were employed in the irretrievable deſtruction of the Jews.

Have we then reaſon to apprehend, from theſe beginnings of ſorrows, that the time is at hand, when this pleaſant land of our nativity, once the ſeat of ſcience and rational liberty, of pure and undefiled religion, of all that can endear, adorn, and dignify human life, ſhall become the ſcene of deſolating fire, bloodſhed, and ſlavery?

SERM. XIII.

It is all in vain that we inveigh againſt our national *enemies*, while we ſuffer our national *ſins* to eſcape our cenſure. It is the latter that have put the ſword into the hands of the former, and they wait but the nod of an inſulted Deity to burſt upon us with irreſiſtible and exterminating fury. *Omnipotence* is our enemy; and we may as well beat our ſpears into pruning-hooks, and our ſwords into ploughſhares, as indulge a hope of employing them with ſucceſs, till by our hearty repentance and general reformation, we have conciliated the divine favour. We have repeatedly tried what can be done without them, and have only ſown the wind, and reaped the whirlwind. We have gone forth in confidence, and returned in confuſion. Our infatuation has hitherto prevented us from reflecting that our firſt and fierceſt enemy is in the citadel of our own hearts. "From "whence (ſays the holy Apoſtle) *come* wars "and fightings among you?—Come they "not even of your luſts?"

SERM. XIII.

And unleſs you will ſuffer yourſelves to be perſuaded to mortify, ſubdue, and eject theſe, your calamities will as certainly proceed, as the effect will follow the cauſe.

The effectual means of doing it are this day put into your hands; life and death, bleſſing and curſing are now before you. Behold, *now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of ſalvation. Perhaps on our diſcharge of the duties of this day depend all our future happineſs, the glory of our nation and kingdom, and our very exiſtence as a free and independent people.

Now, therefore, let man and beaſt be covered with ſackcloth, and cry mightily unto GOD; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands, with weeping, faſting, and prayer. Who can tell but that GOD may even yet turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, ſo juſtly kindled againſt us; by our nameleſs numberleſs enormities, that we periſh not!

And

SERM. XIII.

And when we have acquired that humble and ſerious and recollected frame of mind, which bodily mortification has a natural tendency to produce, we ſhall feel ourſelves diſpoſed and inclined to follow that ſalutary advice of the prophet, ſo applicable to our own awful and alarming circumſtances; "Seek ye the LORD while "he may be found; call ye upon him, "while he is near. Let the wicked man "forſake his way, and the unrighteous man "his thoughts, and let him return unto the "LORD, and he will yet have mercy, and "to our GOD, for he will abundantly "pardon."

If we are not utterly incapable of conviction, it is high time we ſhould ſee and acknowledge that when we ſubſtituted honor, philoſophy, and I know not what of natural religion, inſtead of revelation, and its eternal ſanctions, as ſufficient to regulate the general conduct; the blind became leaders of the blind; and there is therefore no wonder that both ſhould fall into

SERM. XIII.

the ditch of libertiniſm and ſenſuality, and become obnoxious to the fearful and everlaſting wrath of GOD.

But as his majeſty is, ſo is his mercy unſpeakable, incomprehenſible, infinite and eternal; and the *revealed* knowledge of this adorable attribute is all the rational hope and conſolation that is left in this moment of diſtreſs. And to this we have ſtill many gracious encouragements to reſort. Yes! for ever bleſſed and adored be the goodneſs and forbearance of our GOD and SAVIOR, the things which belong unto our peace, and are able to reſtore it, even in this ſad extremity, are not yet hidden from our eyes. If revealed religion be ſuffered to regain its influence over our principles and conduct; we may yet find grace to help in time of need.

The ſenſual, hardened, and profligate *Ninevites* were pitied and pardoned, upon their repentance and converſion, even after the ſentence of their extermination had been actually promulged, and their time

fixed.

fixed. "Yet forty days, and Nineveh ſhall "be overthrown."

And could but ten righteous men have been found in the deteſtable city of Sodom, the Judge of all the earth, entreated by the fervent prayers and tender interceſſions of the Patriarch, condeſcended to anſwer, "I will not deſtroy it for ten's ſake." But as their ſin was univerſal, their fate was inevitable.

Behold then an awful leſſon both againſt deſpair and preſumption! behold the ſeverity and the goodneſs of our GOD: towards them that periſhed, ſeverity; but towards thee, goodneſs, if thou return into the ways of holineſs; otherwiſe, know thou aſſuredly that thou ſhalt be cut off.

As there remaineth no poſſible palliation for unrepented ſin—for all things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do—nor any ſacrifice or expiation for it; "a certain fearful looking for "of judgment and fiery indignation, "which ſhall devour the adverſaries," is all

SERM. XIII.

that reaſon, revelation, and natural conſcience can offer to thoſe, who will not be reformed.

Oh! for the voice of an archangel to ſpeak to the ſoul of every one of us, while there is yet hope of preventing the ſentence, that ſolemn declaration of our GOD;—"Be-"cauſe I have called and ye refuſed; I have "ſtretched out my hand, and no man re-"garded, but ye have ſet at nought all my "counſel, and would none of my re-"proof:"—Our caſe, in that fatal moment, when we rejected *revealed* for *natural* religion, and ſet up *honor* againſt conſcience,—"I alſo will laugh at your cala-"mity, I will mock when your fear "cometh: when your fear cometh as de-"ſolation, and your deſtruction cometh "as a whirlwind, when diſtreſs and an-"guiſh cometh upon you. Then ſhall "they call upon me, but I will not anſwer, "They ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall "not find me. The day of the LORD "cometh

"cometh as a thief in the night; and when "men ſhall ſay peace, and all things are "ſafe; then ſhall ſudden deſtruction come "upon them, and they ſhall not eſcape." Then ſhall appear the wrath of GOD, in the day of vengeance, which obſtinate ſinners, through the ſtubbornneſs of their heart, have heaped upon themſelves who deſpiſed the goodneſs, patience, and long ſuffering of GOD, when, by many awful warnings, he called them continually to repentance. Then ſhall it be too late to cry for mercy, when it is the time of juſtice. SERM. XIII.

Therefore, brethren, ſo permit me to exhort you, in the tender language of the Church—take we heed, betime;—while the day of ſalvation laſteth: lay hold on the *covenanted* mercies of GOD; and every one for himſelf, renew his goſpel engagements, by which alone repentance availeth to the remiſſion of ſin; and by which he yet promiſeth us forgiveneſs of that which

is

SERM. XIII.

is paſt, if with a ſincere and renewed heart, we return unto him.

Then, though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be white as ſnow, and though they be like purple, yet ſhall they be made white as wool. "Turn ye, therefore, "(ſaith the Lord) from all your wicked-"neſs; and iniquity ſhall not be your de-"ſtruction." "For we have an Advocate "with the Father, JESUS CHRIST, the "Righteous, and he is the propitiation for "our ſins."

Let us then, from this important moment, governing the fate of a great empire, return unto him who is the gracious, loving receiver of all true penitents, aſſuring ourſelves that he is ſtill ready to receive us, and to deliver us from the curſe of the law, and the extreme malediction of exhauſted mercy; if we are not inexcuſably wanting to ourſelves.

Then, in that day of agonizing expectation—when the miniſters of vengeance ſhall ariſe, with deſolation on their wings,

to

to hurt the land for the wickedneſs of them that dwell therein; the Angel of Mercy, aſcending from the Eaſt, having the ſeal of pardon from the Living GOD, ſhall cry with a loud voice—"Hurt not the earth, "neither the ſea, nor the trees; for I have "ſealed the repenting and converted ſervants "of our GOD in their forehead; and they "have waſhed their robes, and made them "white in the blood of the LAMB."

May he never—never have occaſion, when from his eternal throne, he ſhall behold our once happy kingdoms and cities, to weep over them, ſaying—"If thou "hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in that "thy day, the things which belonged unto "thy peace! But now they are hidden "from thine eyes!"

To which every awakened ſoul muſt ſay, Amen. Amen! O GOD, for JESUS CHRIST's ſake.

Now to the LORD GOD of Hoſts, who ſetteth faſt the mountains, and is girded

SERM. XIII.

about with ſtrength; who ſtilleth the raging of the ſea, the noiſe of the waves, and the madneſs of the people; he who is mighty to ſave; even Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, be rendered and aſcribed all glory, adoration, and univerſal obedience, conſtant, profound, ardent, and eternal.

SERMON XIV.

ON THE OPENING OF A CHURCH.

SERMON XIV.

ON THE

OPENING OF A CHURCH.

SERMON XIV.

Oh! how amiable are thy dwellings, thou Lord of Hosts. My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord.

Psalm lxxxiv. 1 & 2.

SERM. XIV.

IT has been observed, that we often acquire juster characters of great personages from occurrences in their life, apparently inconsiderable, than from their more important and deliberate transactions. Nor is it difficult to assign a reason for this: in the *latter* their conduct is generally studied, and rather calculated to show what they would be *thought*, than what they really *are*; in the *former*, inattentive to consequences, they suffer *nature* to take

SERM. XIV.

the lead; who never fails, when left to herſelf, to diſcover the hidden man of the heart.

If this rule be applied to the divine poet, it will help us to form ſome judgement of the true temper of his ſoul, with reſpect to religion in general; and with how amiable and benevolent a ſpirit he always attended the *public worſhip*, in particular. For, lamenting the treachery of one, in whom he had repoſed the moſt unlimited and generous confidence, this affecting circumſtance eſcapes him: "we took ſweet counſel together, and walked in the houſe of GOD as *friends*."

The expreſſions of ſincere ſorrow are always *natural*. They flow from a heart too intent on its ſufferings, to ſtudy for ornaments of language—too full of real injury to invent artificial exaggerations.

We ſee then, in this one ſtriking feature of his character, that however different men's opinions may be, he took it for granted they carried no ill-will into the church

church with them; but conſidering that univerſal good-will is eſſential to the very exiſtence of true religion, all clamour and malice was induſtriouſly ſuppreſſed: and that whenever they reſorted to public worſhip, they met together in the houſe of GOD as *friends*. SERM. XIV.

Whether the ſame ſpirit of unanimity has actuated your ſervices in it this day, that your prayers be not hindered, and turned into ſin, I muſt recommend it to your own conſciences to determine.

"Glory to GOD in the Higheſt, on "earth peace, good-will towards men!" may be regarded as the definition, or emphatical compendium of our moſt holy religion.

Our firſt buſineſs muſt be to remember that in all our addreſſes here to that Being whoſe glory is thus ſignally promoted, we humbly beſeech him to "forgive us our "treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſ-"paſs againſt us." In all our prayers we only deſire to be treated by this kind of re-

SERM. XIV.

taliation. Whoever, therefore, indulges in his heart any uncharitable hatred of his neighbour, he converts even the benevolent ſervices of the church into curſes on his own defenceleſs head, and the temple of Mercy into a tribunal of Juſtice. Even he, indeed, may be ſenſibly affected with the beauty and elegance of ſuch ſtructures, and may exclaim with the Pſalmiſt; "O, "how amiable are thy dwellings, thou "LORD of Hoſts!" But ſurely he cannot, without evident impropriety, without infinite danger to himſelf, while he continues in an unforgiven ſtate, he cannot without the imputation of ignorance, or madneſs declare that *his* ſoul hath a de- "ſire and longing to enter into the courts "of the Lord." No; ſuch a man is VIRTUALLY excluded from the church, and cut off from the congregation of the faithful, by his own irreligious ſelf-deſtructive paſſions.

Now, how ſevere an affliction this has been thought by the wiſeſt and beſt of mankind,

mankind, even when their abſence from the public worſhip has ariſen, not from their own voluntary fault, but unavoidable misfortune, may be learned from the author of my text. He, amid the variety of diſtreſs which ſurrounded him, ſuch as the bitter perſecution of Saul, the untimely death of one of his children, and the unnatural rebellion of another; ſeems to lament nothing, with ſuch pathetic ſorrow, as his detention from the houſe of prayer.

Hear with what holy impatience he expreſſeth himſelf in the 42d Pſalm; "As "the heart panteth for the water brooks, "ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O GOD! "my ſoul thirſteth for GOD, for the living "GOD, when ſhall I come and appear be"fore GOD?" And here, in the 84th, "O, how amiable are thy dwellings thou "LORD of Hoſts! my ſoul hath a deſire "and longing to enter into the Courts of "the LORD."

And that none among us may henceforth be ſtrangers to this temper of mind—the

SERM. XIV.

native ſoil of every virtue—permit me to enquire before you,

In the firſt place, in what ſenſe the temple, or church, may be called the dwellings and courts of the LORD?

And, ſecondly, why the divine poet, and all other ſincerely religious perſons, are ſo impatient, when hindered from reſorting to it?—"My ſoul hath a deſire and longing "to enter into the courts of the LORD." Or, as it is ſtill more emphatically expreſſed in the other verſion, "My ſoul longeth, "yea even fainteth for the courts of the LORD!"

And may that eternal Spirit of Grace, who alone worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleaſure, open the eyes of the ſabbath-breaker, that he may ſee and confeſs the danger and folly of irreligion; and acquire an habitual veneration both for the day and place univerſally ſet apart for advancing the glory of GOD, and the ſalvation of his own immortal ſoul!

SERM. XIV.

First then, by these expressions the *dwellings and courts of the Lord*, it is evident we may understand not only the former and latter temple, under the Mosaick œconomy, and the tabernacle before them; but every other national *church* or *chapel*, where pure and undefiled religion is celebrated, which is professedly built, and solemnly set apart for GOD's worship and service. And which he may, therefore, in a peculiar manner be said to *dwell* in, or sanctify by his more immediate presence. It is the very language of our own laws, that by the formalities of dedication they are presented or given unto GOD.

But will he *accept* them? Will GOD indeed dwell on *earth*?—"Behold! the "heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot "contain thee. How much less this house "which we have builded." This may be the language of *modern infidelity*; as it was, but with far *different* sentiments, of the wise son of the author of my text. When Solomon had, with a sublimity of taste

SERM. XIV.

that the united invention of ſucceeding ages has been unable to improve in the minuteſt article, and with an expenſe that almoſt exhauſted the riches of the univerſe —when he had finiſhed that wonder of the world, his magnificent temple: ſuch, upon a review of the work, and a reflexion on the tranſcendent perfections of the Deity—ſuch was his rapturous exclamation.

The building was, indeed, too glorious for the mightieſt monarch upon earth to inhabit, too ſacred for unhallowed feet even to enter. And yet, when he conſidered that *uncreated* Excellence had condeſcended to put his name there, its utter *unworthineſs* and *poverty* were all that occupied his imagination.

And we can hardly ſuppoſe any conception ſo groſs as to believe, that the divine Preſence could be reſtrained to that, to the excluſion of any other imaginable place in the created univerſe.

No;

SERM. XIV.

No; GOD is an immenſe, infinite, and omnipreſent Spirit, and cannot, in ſuch a ſenſe, be ſaid to dwell in temples made with hands. Iſaiah introduces the Supreme Being himſelf ſpeaking on this ſubject:— "Thus ſaith the LORD, the heaven is my "throne, and the earth is my footſtool; "where is the houſe that ye build unto "me? and where is the place of my reſt?" And yet, in the very next verſe, he declares; "I will look even unto him that "is of a poor and contrite ſpirit, and "trembleth at my word." Or, as it is expreſſed in a parallel paſſage of the ſame prophet; "Thus ſaith the High and Lofty "One, that inhabiteth eternity, *I dwell* "with him that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit." So likewiſe our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST has promiſed, in the xivth of St. John, "If a man will "love me and keep my words, my father "will love him, and we will come unto "him, and make our *abode* with him." Now, as theſe expreſſions certainly imply

ſomething

SERM. XIV.

ſomething more than GOD's general omnipreſence; as they intimate a more immediate connexion with the ſincerely humble and devote man than with the reſt of his creatures: ſo his permitting the temples, chapels, and churches, over which his holy name has been invoked, to be emphatically called, in the language of inſpiration, *His* courts, *His* houſes, *His* dwelling; we cannot but conclude, he is eſſentially preſent in *them*, in ſome manner, that he is *not* in other common unconſecrated buildings. "Thy way, O LORD, is in the ſanctuary," ſaith David. And GOD himſelf has condeſcended to anſwer; "Here have I placed "my name, and here will I *dwell*, for I "have a delight therein." And ſtill more generally in the 20th chapter of Exodus, "In *every* place, where the memorial of "my name ſhall be, I will *come* unto thee, "and bleſs thee." As to the very *mode*, in which the unſearchable Godhead fulfills theſe infallible promiſes; it concerns not us to know it. Enough is revealed to engage

gage our profoundeſt veneration, enough is concealed to exerciſe our faith. "The "LORD is in his holy temple (ſays the "prophet) let all the earth keep ſilence "before him." SERM. XI.

And he that can enter any edifice thus awfully diſtinguiſhed, with the ſame thoughtleſs indifference, as he does other common ſecular buildings: that can behave and converſe in them lighty and irreverently, muſt be either in the gall of infidelity or the bond of ignorance. A moment's ſerious reflexion muſt impreſs the divine mandate; "Put off thy *ſhoes of folly* from thy "feet, for the place whereon thou ſtandeſt "is holy ground."

But the inſpired writer not only calls them the houſe and dwellings of the LORD, but his courts. It was the peculiar privilege of the ancient people to live under a theocracy, or the immediate government and legiſlation of GOD himſelf, without any other king, or ſupreme magiſtrate whatſoever. Correſpondent with this was the idea of regarding

SERM. XIV.

garding the place of publick worſhip as GOD's *palace* or *courts*, his preſence chamber and room of audience—where he received, by his own appointment, the homage, petitions, and addreſſes of all his ſubjects; and promulged his venerable laws, in an audible, miraculous, manner, from above the mercy-ſeat, and between the two cherubim.

And that GOD has, in all ages, acknowledged his own peculiar regard to, and vindicated his unalienable property and intereſt in, ſuch holy buildings, there are as many proofs, as there are inſtances recorded in hiſtory, of uncommon judgements falling on the heads of the *ſacrilegious*.

But I proceed to conſider, *in the ſecond place*, why the divine poet expreſſes ſo *fervent* a deſire to reviſit the Oratory—"my "ſoul longeth, yea even fainteth to enter "into the courts of the LORD.

And here *gratitude* muſt ſtand foremoſt in the catalogue of his amiable motives.

The

SERM. XIV.

The pſalmiſt had been in his own perſon the object of GOD's moſt ſingular and extraordinary providence. The time would fail me ſhould I recount the ſtupendous miracles of preſervation that he had been favoured with, from the day when he was but a plain and ſimple ſhepherd in the wilderneſs to his being exalted to the diadem, and peaceably eſtabliſhed on the mighty thrones of Iſrael and Juda.

Now, it is certain when we are duly affected with the ſenſe of benefits, we find ourſelves unable to keep ſilence. We take a pleaſure in publiſhing them to the world. How then could the grateful and ingenuous ſpirit of a *David* forbear to wiſh for an opportunity of going to that houſe, where the ſacrifice of thankſgiving was moſt acceptable to his great benefactor? where he might moſt ſignally advance the glory of GOD, by making the whole congregation witneſſes of his gratitude? He thought himſelf inſolvent even in *thanks* till he had made a *public* acknowledgement. Obſerve the

SERM. XIV.

the ſacred vehemence of his impatience: under his own ſuſpicions of appearing ungrateful: "Open me the gates of righte-"ouſneſs, that I may go into them, and "give thanks unto the LORD." And again, "O, come hither and hearken, all "ye that fear the LORD, and I will tell "you what he hath done for my ſoul."

But David had been as eminent for his failings as for his virtues. And the neceſſary conſequence of all wilful ſin is a moſt painful remorſe of conſcience, and a certain fearful looking-for of puniſhment and fiery indignation. As ardently therefore as he muſt wiſh to be delivered from theſe, and reconciled to his offended GOD and Father, ſo ardently—with ſuch trembling *impatience*, muſt he ſigh and languiſh for his return to the publick worſhip; becauſe he could there, and *there only*, offer the *expiatory* ſacrifices appointed for ſuch tranſgreſſions. So differently did he think from thoſe exalted wits, the free-thinkers of the preſent times, who, as if knowing the

the will of GOD, better than he does himſelf, form their religious opinions from any thing except his own divine revelation. "Thy word (ſays he) is the lanthern unto "my feet, and the light unto my paths."

But it may be objected that his own circumſtances were too ſingular for this to be admitted as an argument that his countrymen and contemporaries were obliged to imitate his example. What then, are *gratitude* to GOD for bleſſings and mercies, and remorſe for the abuſe of them—can theſe be regarded as ſingularities? No; they are evidently affections eternal and univerſal—co-extenſive, not only with all the *Jewiſh* people, but with human nature itſelf.

Beſides, as GOD himſelf was their immediate governor, as they were convinced by the evidence of their ſenſes, that he was the ſole author of their preſervation, and proſperity, their own reaſon muſt ſuggeſt the neceſſity of their aſſembling together as a people thus eminently diſtinguiſhed,

to

SERM. XIV.

to offer up their united prayers and thankſgivings; and with one mind and one mouth, to glorify their common benefactor. As he had been pleaſed to join them together by the communication of his extraordinary favors; there was an evident *propriety*, at leaſt, in their joining themſelves together, to celebrate the goodneſs of that GOD, and to make thoſe favors, to re-aſcend to him, as it were, by their general benedictions and hymns of praiſe.

It muſt be confeſſed, we have not, under the Goſpel diſpenſation, any courts or dwellings of the LORD, in which he manifeſts himſelf by ſuch *viſible* tokens of his preſence. It might have been preſumed that among "thoſe who profeſs and "call themſelves Chriſtians," there could not be any, who require ſuch *external* motives to religious obedience, as that groſs and ſenſual people.

But are not our churches and chapels, being ſolemnly dedicated to *religious* purpoſes only:—are they not naturally apt

to

SERM. XIV.

to excite greater reverence and devotion in the diſcharge of divine ſervice, than edifices of common and worldly uſe? I truſt I may appeal to the experience of many ſerious perſons in this congregation, for a confirming anſwer. Yes! the place naturally reminds us of our duty there—ſtrikes a kind of awe into our hearts, and inſenſibly lifts up our thoughts and affections to that great and ſacred Majeſty, for whoſe ſervice it is ſet apart.

The mind of man, even in ſpiritual concerns, acts with a corporeal dependency, and cannot but be influenced in its operations, according to the different qualities of external objects. And if the ſenſes ſuggeſt one thing to the heart, and our mouths utter another; our prayers are degraded into mere lip-labor, and become offenſive to GOD, and require other prayers to make expiation for them. Let no man therefore preſume to aſſert that he can render as acceptable ſervice to his Creator in his *own* houſe as in GOD's. Unleſs he can

SERM. XIV.

rationally promiſe himſelf, that he ſhall certainly find the ſame ſuccours of divine grace—the ſame devout affections, in the former as in the latter:—which is abſolutely and evidently impoſſible. In places where we have been uſed to tranſact common and worldly buſineſs, common and worldly objects will be always ready to obtrude upon the mind, mix with our devotions, and diſtract our attention.

In every great trading ſociety there are a thouſand melancholy inſtances how naturally—how neceſſarily, too eager an attention to worldly buſineſs or pleaſure indiſpoſes men to all fervent and vital religion. And it is evident to demonſtration that there can be no place that has ſo *little* tendency to remind us of temporal concerns as the churches or chapels of GOD. They are dedicated to his ſervice only. In theſe are read and explained thoſe ſacred volumes of divine eloquence, whoſe chief argument it is to perſuade—to compel us to lift up

up our affections from earth to heaven, and to make us wiſe unto eternal ſalvation. SERM. XIV.

Add to this another moſt important and intereſting conſideration; it is here only we can have a proper opportunity of maintaining a due ſenſe of GOD in the world: of reminding both ourſelves and others of his providence and power; and of our abſolute dependence on him for every neceſſary and convenience of life, as well as for life itſelf. To make a parade of our *private* devotions, is prepoſterous oſtentation, and deſpicable hypocriſy. And if a man was infidel enough for downright *Atheiſm*, and, actuated by the execrable vanity of modern infidelity—wiſhed to convince his neighbours that he was ſo; it is not poſſible, perhaps, he could do it with more ſucceſs than by contemptuouſly refuſing to join in the publick worſhip. Whereas, by a contrary conduct, we have a proper opportunity—perhaps the only unexceptionable one—of letting our *light* ſhine before men; evidencing our truly wiſe regard to religion,

SERM. XIV.

which CHRIST himſelf hath taught us will be productive of glory to our Father who is in heaven.

To the honour of our common nature we muſt believe there is ſomething contagious in good as well as in evil example; and when, like the Royal author of my text, perſons of exalted ſtations or affluent fortunes, are regular in their attendance on the offices of the church, they will not only have the immediate ſatisfaction—the greateſt a *benevolent* ſpirit is capable of—to lead others to their duty; but they will entitle themſelves to that glorious additional recompence propoſed by their faithful Creator: "They that be wiſe and turn "many to righteouſneſs, ſhall ſhine as the "brightneſs of the firmament, and as the "ſtars for ever and ever."

Is there a heart among us ſo loſt to every ſentiment of religion, as not to feel himſelf diſpoſed, on this conſideration only, to take up the ejaculation of David, "My "ſoul

" ſoul hath a deſire and longing to enter " into the courts of the LORD!" SERM. XIV.

Theſe however are, inconteſtibly, advantages, which no ſpecies of *private* religion can poſſibly procure for us. And think! O conſider, my brethren! what agoniſing horror and confuſion muſt overwhelm that wretch, trembling at the bar of Judgement, who ſhall find the irreligion of his neighbours' children, ſervants, and dependants charged to his own example in prophaning the ſabbath.

Reflect, I beſeech you, that in the church only can be regularly adminiſtered, as a communion, that venerable ſacrament which GOD himſelf hath inſtituted as the neceſſary ſeal of his grace and mercy—the infallible means of confirming our faith, ſuſtaining our hope, comforting our afflictions, ſtrengthening our virtue, and giving efficacy to our repentance. In one word, it is here, that when two or three are gathered together in his name, the bleſſed JESUS—even he who died for our ſalvation,

SERM. XIV.

ſalvation, hath pledged his own infallible veracity, "that he will be in the "midſt of them." That is, in every congregation, ſolemnly and lawfully convened to celebrate any ſacred inſtitution of his, he himſelf will be in a peculiar manner *preſent*, to ſpiritualize our affections, aſſiſt our devotions, and accept our ſincere though imperfect adoration.

Go now, ſearch through your whole bibles, and ſee if any privilege equally great and glorious with this, can poſſibly be expected by thoſe, who wilfully turn their backs on the church: even though we could prevail on ourſelves to believe they are regular in all their *private* devotions?

No; the more you conſult the lively oracles, the readier you will be to pronounce of every edifice they dedicated to the divine glory, in the words of the tranſported patriarch; "Surely the LORD is "in this place, and I knew it not. How "awful is this place! This is none other

"but

"but the Houſe of GOD, and this is the "gate of heaven!" SERM. XIV.

Men, brethren, and fellow-Chriſtians! contemplate with pleaſing reverence theſe holy walls, to which ſuch great and inеſtimable privileges belong. Behold the genuine BETHESDA, where every one that ſteppeth in, with ſuitable diſpoſitions, may be made *whole* of whatſoever diſeaſe his ſoul is oppreſſed with. Here your bleſſed Redeemer is ſtill *viſible*, in his miracles of benevolence and love. Here the ſpiritually *blind may receive their ſight; the lame walk, the worldly-minded leper be cleanſed, the deaf* to the voice of religion may *hear*, *the dead*, in treſpaſſes and ſins, be *raiſed up*; and *the poor have the Goſpel preached to them.*

As you have, therefore, any regard to the honor of GOD the Father, any gratitude to GOD the Son, any hope of the mighty conſolation of GOD the Holy-Ghoſt—as you have any love for your own ſouls, or thoſe of your children, friends, and ſervants: Let no worldly engagements henceforth

SERM. XIV.

henceforth prevent your regular, exemplary, conſcientious attendance at this treaſury of divine grace.

Remember, deſtitute of the riches here, and here only to be acquired, your immortal ſpirit—whatever may be your worldly opulence—your moſt precious ſoul muſt remain poor and miſerable and naked to all eternity. Conſider what has been ſaid, and may GOD give you and me a right underſtanding in this, and all other things that belong to our eternal ſalvation.

END OF VOL. I.